

113TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 5282

To award posthumously a Congressional Gold Medal to Medgar Wiley Evers, in recognition of his contributions and ultimate sacrifice in the fight for racial equality in the United States.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 30, 2014

Mr. HARPER (for himself and Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Financial Services

A BILL

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1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Medgar Wiley Evers
5 Congressional Gold Medal Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 The Congress finds the following:

1 (1) An integral part of the fight for racial
2 equality, Medgar Wiley Evers, was born July 2,
3 1925, in Decatur, Mississippi, to James and Jessie
4 Evers.

5 (2) Faithfully serving his country, Medgar
6 Evers willingly left high school to join the Army at
7 the start of World War II.

8 (3) After the conclusion of the war, Mr. Evers
9 returned home to Mississippi, completed high school,
10 enrolled in Alcorn Agricultural and Mechanical Col-
11 lege (presently known as Alcorn State University)
12 and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Business
13 Administration.

14 (4) While at Alcorn State University, Medgar
15 Evers met and married fellow Alcorn student, Myrlie
16 Beasley, of Vicksburg, Mississippi.

17 (5) Upon graduation, Myrlie and Medgar Evers
18 moved to Mound Bayou, Mississippi, where Medgar
19 held a job with Magnolia Mutual Life Insurance
20 Company, and began establishing local chapters of
21 the National Association for the Advancement of
22 Colored People (“NAACP”) throughout the Mis-
23 sissippi Delta.

24 (6) Having been so moved by the immense suf-
25 fering of African-Americans in Mississippi, Medgar

1 Evers felt compelled to fight to change the cir-
2 cumstances and challenges facing them and, in
3 1954, Medgar Evers became the first known Afri-
4 can-American to apply to the University of Mis-
5 sissippi School of Law. Mr. Evers was denied enroll-
6 ment.

7 (7) In 1954, Medgar Evers became the first
8 Field Secretary for the Mississippi chapter of the
9 NAACP.

10 (8) In the capacities of his new position Medgar
11 Evers hosted numerous voter registration efforts in
12 Mississippi and, as a result of these activities, re-
13 ceived numerous threats against his life.

14 (9) Despite these threats, Mr. Evers carried on
15 his work with dedication and courage, organizing
16 rallies, building membership within the NAACP, and
17 traveling around the country educating the public on
18 the fight for Civil Rights.

19 (10) Medgar and Myrlie Evers' passion for
20 quality education for all children led them to file suit
21 against the Jackson, Mississippi, public school sys-
22 tem gaining him attention with the national media
23 as a leader of the Civil Rights Movement in Mis-
24 sissippi.

1 (11) As a result of his continued and ongoing
2 efforts—rallies, sit-ins, and protests—to stand up
3 for the rights of African-Americans in Mississippi,
4 Mr. Evers was arrested, beaten, and jailed with his
5 due process rights denied.

6 (12) The senseless and abhorrent violence
7 against Mr. Evers reached its pinnacle on June 12,
8 1963, when he was violently shot in front of his
9 home and died shortly afterwards in a local hospital,
10 mere hours after President John F. Kennedy had
11 made a national televised speech from the Oval Of-
12 fice calling for full racial integration in America.
13 The Civil Rights Act was enacted the following year.

14 (13) As a veteran, Evers was buried with full
15 military honors at Arlington National Cemetery.

16 (14) On June 23, 1963, Byron De La
17 Beckwith, a member of the White Citizens' Council,
18 was arrested for Evers' murder, but juries in 1964,
19 composed solely of white men, twice deadlocked on
20 De La Beckwith's guilt, resulting in mistrials.

21 (15) Following two trials resulting in acquittal,
22 in 1990, Mrs. Evers convinced Mississippi prosecu-
23 tors to reopen Medgar Evers' murder case, and a
24 new trial led to the conviction and life imprisonment
25 of Medgar Evers' killer in 1994.

1 (16) It is befitting that Congress bestow the
2 highest civilian honor, the Congressional Gold
3 Medal, to Medgar Wiley Evers, posthumously in
4 honor of his work on behalf of racial equality which
5 tragically led to his assassination, but also was a
6 major catalyst in passage and enactment of the Civil
7 Rights Act in 1964.

8 **SEC. 3. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

9 (a) PRESENTATION AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of
10 the House of Representatives and the President pro tem-
11 pore of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements
12 for the posthumous presentation, on behalf of the Con-
13 gress, of a gold medal of appropriate design in commemo-
14 ration of Medgar Wiley Evers, in recognition of his con-
15 tributions and ultimate sacrifice in the fight for racial
16 equality in the United States.

17 (b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For purposes of the
18 presentation referred to in subsection (a), the Secretary
19 of the Treasury (referred to in this Act as the “Sec-
20 retary”) shall strike a gold medal with suitable emblems,
21 devices, and inscriptions, to be determined by the Sec-
22 retary.

23 (c) AWARD OF MEDAL.—Following the award of the
24 gold medal in commemoration of Medgar Wiley Evers
25 under subsection (a), the medal shall be given to the Mis-

1 Mississippi Civil Rights Museum, where it shall be available
2 for display or temporary loan to be displayed elsewhere,
3 as appropriate.

4 **SEC. 4. DUPLICATE MEDALS.**

5 The Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in
6 bronze of the gold medal struck pursuant to section 3
7 under such regulations as the Secretary may prescribe, at
8 a price sufficient to cover the cost thereof, including labor,
9 materials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses,
10 and the cost of the gold medal.

11 **SEC. 5. STATUS OF MEDALS.**

12 (a) NATIONAL MEDALS.—The medals struck pursu-
13 ant to this Act are national medals for purposes of chapter
14 51 of title 31, United States Code.

15 (b) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of section
16 5134 of title 31, United States Code, all medals struck
17 under this Act shall be considered to be numismatic items.

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