

114TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1743

To award posthumously a Congressional Gold Medal to Harriet Tubman, in recognition of her contributions and lifelong commitment in the fight for freedom of enslaved men, women, and children in the United States.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 13, 2015

Ms. CLARKE of New York introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Financial Services

A BILL

To award posthumously a Congressional Gold Medal to Harriet Tubman, in recognition of her contributions and lifelong commitment in the fight for freedom of enslaved men, women, and children in the United States.

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 “Harriet ‘Moses’ Tub-

5 man Congressional Gold Medal Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 The Congress finds the following:

1 (1) An integral part of the fight for abolition of
2 slavery, Harriet Tubman, was born into slavery as
3 Araminta “Minty” Harriet Ross in Dorchester
4 County, Maryland, to Harriet “Rit” Green and Ben
5 Ross.

6 (2) Neither an exact year nor exact location of
7 her birth is known as is the case with many slaves
8 in the United States, but historians estimate her
9 birth year to be around 1820.

10 (3) Araminta’s hardships began early with the
11 fracturing of her family as three of her eight siblings
12 were sold to distant plantations in addition to endur-
13 ing physical violence that caused permanent injuries
14 from: scars, seizures, headaches, and narcoleptic epi-
15 sodes with intense dream states.

16 (4) Many historians believe that the story of
17 Araminta’s mother, Rit, hiding her younger brother
18 “Moses” with the aid of other slaves and free blacks
19 in the community from a Georgia slave trader to be
20 the pivotal example of resistance that would drive
21 her actions in the future.

22 (5) Furthermore, the meaning of freedom was
23 ambiguous and unsecure as Araminta’s father, Ben,
24 through an act of manumission in a former owner’s
25 will was technically freed at the age of 45.

1 (6) Despite Ben’s freedom and the manumis-
2 sion stipulations that applied to his wife and their
3 children, Ben held little clout to challenge the own-
4 ers that chose not to free his family and had no
5 choice but to continue working for his former own-
6 ers.

7 (7) Around 1844, Araminta married a freed-
8 man named John Tubman, took her mother’s first
9 name Harriet, and began planning her escape from
10 slavery.

11 (8) In the cover of night guided by the North
12 Star, Harriet escaped by traveling nearly 90 miles to
13 Pennsylvania in 1849 by means of the Underground
14 Railroad, a well-organized network guided by White
15 abolitionists, freed, and enslaved Blacks.

16 (9) The following year, the U.S. Congress
17 passed the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 that called
18 for both “slave” and “free” States’ law enforcement
19 to report runaway slaves for capture.

20 (10) Nevertheless, Harriet did not yield to the
21 growing danger and risked her own newly acquired
22 freedom to return to free her family and other slaves
23 while redirecting the Underground Railroad to Can-
24 ada, which prohibited slavery.

1 (11) Harriet’s leadership and courage earned
2 her the nickname of “Moses” as she facilitated the
3 freedom of many slaves and would also encounter
4 other historical figures such as abolitionist John
5 Brown and likely Frederick Douglass.

6 (12) During the Civil War, Harriet would have
7 many roles working for the Union Army which in-
8 cluded using her experience to act as an armed scout
9 and spy.

10 (13) Harriet was the first woman in the Civil
11 War to lead an armed expedition, which liberated
12 more than 700 slaves during the Combahee River
13 Raid in South Carolina earning her the moniker
14 “General Tubman”.

15 (14) In 1859, Republican abolitionist U.S. Sen-
16 ator William H. Seward sold Harriet a piece of land
17 on the outskirts of Auburn, New York.

18 (15) Harriet’s home in Auburn would remain
19 her haven for family and friends following the war
20 with a portion of the property donated to the Afri-
21 can Methodist Episcopal Church where the Harriet
22 Tubman Home for the Aged opened in 1908.

23 (16) Harriet’s efforts for equality did not cease
24 as she became an advocate to the cause of women’s
25 suffrage.

1 (17) In 1913, Harriet’s death was commemo-
2 rated with military honors at Fort Hill Cemetery in
3 Auburn, New York.

4 (18) In 2014, President Barack Obama signed
5 into law the National Defense Authorization Act for
6 2015, which included a provision establishing a Har-
7 riet Tubman National Historical Park.

8 (19) It is befitting that Congress bestow the
9 highest civilian honor, the Congressional Gold
10 Medal, to Harriet “Moses” Tubman, posthumously
11 in honor of her work on behalf of civil rights, her
12 selflessness, resilience to adversity, and actions dur-
13 ing the Civil War that would save the lives of hun-
14 dreds.

15 **SEC. 3. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

16 (a) PRESENTATION AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of
17 the House of Representatives and the President pro tem-
18 pore of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements
19 for the posthumous presentation, on behalf of the Con-
20 gress, of a gold medal of appropriate design in commemo-
21 ration of Harriet Tubman, in recognition of her contribu-
22 tions and lifelong commitment in the fight for freedom of
23 enslaved men, women, and children in the United States.

24 (b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For purposes of the
25 presentation referred to in subsection (a), the Secretary

1 of the Treasury (referred to in this Act as the “Sec-
2 retary”) shall strike a gold medal with suitable emblems,
3 devices, and inscriptions, to be determined by the Sec-
4 retary.

5 (c) AWARD OF MEDAL.—Following the award of the
6 gold medal in commemoration of Harriet Tubman under
7 subsection (a), the medal shall be given to the Harriet
8 Tubman National Historical Park in Auburn, New York,
9 her final resting place, where it shall be available for dis-
10 play or temporary loan to be displayed elsewhere, as ap-
11 propriate.

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

13 The Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in
14 bronze of the gold medal struck pursuant to section 3
15 under such regulations as the Secretary may prescribe, at
16 a price sufficient to cover the cost thereof, including labor,
17 materials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses,
18 and the cost of the gold medal.

19 **SEC. 5. STATUS OF MEDALS.**

20 (a) NATIONAL MEDALS.—The medals struck pursu-
21 ant to this Act are national medals for purposes of chapter
22 51 of title 31, United States Code.

1 (b) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of section
2 5134 of title 31, United States Code, all medals struck
3 under this Act shall be considered to be numismatic items.

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