

114TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 438

To award a Congressional Gold Medal to Joanne King Herring and posthumously to each of Charles “Charlie” Wilson and Gustav Lascaris “Gust” Avrakotos, in recognition of their personal sacrifice and service to the country.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 21, 2015

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas (for himself, Mr. McCAUL, Ms. JACKSON LEE, and Ms. DELAURO) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Financial Services

A BILL

To award a Congressional Gold Medal to Joanne King Herring and posthumously to each of Charles “Charlie” Wilson and Gustav Lascaris “Gust” Avrakotos, in recognition of their personal sacrifice and service to the country.

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. FINDINGS.**

4 Congress finds the following:

5 (1) Charlie Wilson, Gust Avrakotos and Joanne
6 King Herring played a critical role in ending the So-
7 viet Union’s invasion of Afghanistan, which ulti-

1 mately was a factor leading to the collapse of the
2 Soviet Union.

3 (2) Charlie Wilson was elected to Congress in
4 1972 from the 2nd Congressional District of Texas
5 and served until he retired in 1996. He was a mem-
6 ber of the House Appropriations Committee.

7 (3) Gust Avrakotos joined the Central Intel-
8 ligence Agency (“CIA”) in 1962 and his assign-
9 ments included a mission in Greece and duty in the
10 CIA’s Langley, Virginia, headquarters. While at
11 Langley, Gust Avrakotos oversaw the largest covert
12 operation in the CIA’s history to defeat the Soviet
13 Union in Afghanistan.

14 (4) Joanne King Herring is a private citizen
15 and humanitarian who currently resides in Houston,
16 Texas.

17 (5) A few months after the Soviet invasion of
18 Afghanistan in 1979, Joanne King Herring risked
19 her life by traveling to Afghanistan to film the atroc-
20 ities that the Soviet soldiers were inflicting on the
21 Afghan people.

22 (6) Joanne King Herring shared her film with
23 prominent current and former public officials, in-
24 cluding then Vice President George H.W. Bush,
25 then CIA chief William Casey and Henry Kissinger.

1 (7) Congressman Charlie Wilson was a vocal
2 opponent of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and
3 secured appropriations over several years for the
4 CIA's covert operation to fund the Afghan resist-
5 ance.

6 (8) Joanne King Herring arranged for Charlie
7 Wilson to travel with her to Pakistan to visit Afghan
8 refugee camps in 1982. After witnessing the physical
9 harm caused by the Soviets to the Afghan people,
10 Charlie Wilson was further determined to secure
11 funding for the resistance movement.

12 (9) In 1984, CIA officer Gustav Avrakotos con-
13 tacted Charlie Wilson, breaking the CIA's policy
14 against lobbying Congress for money, and asked
15 Wilson for additional funding to support the CIA's
16 covert operation in Afghanistan, which Gustav
17 Avrakotos was leading.

18 (10) The covert operation was successful and
19 the Soviet Union withdrew from Afghanistan in
20 1989.

21 (11) The heroic efforts of Charlie Wilson, Jo-
22 anne King Herring and Gustav Avrakotos played a
23 key role in leading to the collapse of the Soviet
24 Union in 1991.

1 **SEC. 2. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

2 (a) PRESENTATION AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of
3 the House of Representatives and the President Pro Tem-
4 pore of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements
5 for the presentation, on behalf of the Congress, of a gold
6 medal of appropriate design to Joanne King Herring, and
7 posthumous presentation of such a medal to each of
8 Charles “Charlie” Wilson and Gustav Lascaris “Gust”
9 Avrakotos, in recognition of their personal sacrifice and
10 service to the country.

11 (b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For the purposes of the
12 award referred to in subsection (a), the Secretary of the
13 Treasury (hereafter in this Act referred to as the “Sec-
14 retary”) shall strike the gold medals with suitable em-
15 blems, devices, and inscriptions, to be determined by the
16 Secretary.

17 (c) AWARD OF MEDAL.—Following the presentation
18 of the gold medals referred to in subsection (a), the medals
19 for Charles Wilson and Gustav Avrakotos shall be awarded
20 respectively to Barbara Ablerstadt Wilson and Claudette
21 M. Avrakotos, the wives of the deceased.

22 **SEC. 3. DUPLICATE MEDALS.**

23 The Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in
24 bronze of the gold medals struck pursuant to section 2
25 under such regulations as the Secretary may prescribe, at
26 a price sufficient to cover the cost thereof, including labor,

1 materials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses,
2 and the cost of the gold medals.

3 **SEC. 4. STATUS OF MEDALS.**

4 (a) NATIONAL MEDALS.—Medals struck pursuant to
5 this Act are national medals for purposes of chapter 51
6 of title 31, United States Code.

7 (b) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of sections
8 5134 and 5136 of title 31, United States Code, all medals
9 struck under this act shall be considered numismatic
10 items.

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