

114TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 958

To posthumously award a Congressional gold medal to Clyde Kennard in recognition of his sacrifice for education equality.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 12, 2015

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Financial Services

A BILL

To posthumously award a Congressional gold medal to Clyde Kennard in recognition of his sacrifice for education equality.

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 “Clyde Kennard Con-
5 gressional Gold Medal Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 The Congress finds that:

8 (1) July 4, 2013, marked the 50th anniversary
9 of the one of the largest miscarriages of justice in
10 Mississippi legislative history, as Clyde Kennard was

1 framed to prevent his entrance into the University of
2 Southern Mississippi (U.S.M.).

3 (2) Clyde Kennard was a veteran of the United
4 States Army returning home to Hattiesburg, Mis-
5 sissippi, following his stepfather's death to assist his
6 mother at the family's farm.

7 (3) Kennard had attended the University of
8 Chicago with aid from the G.I. Bill prior to return-
9 ing home. In an effort to complete his education, he
10 applied to the University of Southern Mississippi in
11 1955.

12 (4) Kennard was denied entrance to the all
13 White college on the grounds that he could not pro-
14 vide five character references from U.S.M. alumni,
15 making the request nearly impossible.

16 (5) President William D. McCain refused to
17 admit Kennard, despite admitting to the Mississippi
18 State Sovereignty Commission that Kennard met all
19 of the requisite admission criteria for U.S.M.

20 (6) On December 6, 1958, Kennard wrote a let-
21 ter to the Hattiesburg American discussing the ra-
22 cial tensions caused by his hopes to attend U.S.M.
23 and chronicling African-American hopes to be viewed
24 as equal.

1 (7) The Sovereignty Commission doubled their
2 efforts to discredit Kennard, employing an ex-FBI
3 agent to go through Kennard's records of his six
4 years as a student at the University of Chicago.

5 (8) Following Kennard's 1958 letter, Governor
6 James P. Coleman called Kennard to his office
7 where he asked him to hold off on the application
8 to U.S.M. until after the election.

9 (9) Following the election, Kennard applied and
10 his University of Chicago transcript was "lost" by
11 U.S.M. administration.

12 (10) President McCain called Kennard to his
13 office and informed him of the administration's
14 search for the papers.

15 (11) As Kennard left the office, two Forrest
16 County constables arrested him, claiming to have
17 followed him from his home for having whiskey in a
18 then dry State.

19 (12) He was charged, found guilty and fined
20 \$600. As a result, his bank credit was cut off.

21 (13) On September 25, 1960, Kennard was ar-
22 rested for having stolen \$25 worth of chicken feed
23 from Forrest County Cooperative warehouse. He was
24 convicted and sentenced to seven years at Parchman
25 Penitentiary.

1 (14) While in the Parchman Penitentiary in
2 1961, Kennard was diagnosed with colon cancer and
3 was refused care.

4 (15) By 1963, after the cancer had become un-
5 treatable, Governor Ross Barnett indefinitely sus-
6 pended Kennard's sentence.

7 (16) On July 4, 1963, Kennard died of colon
8 cancer.

9 **SEC. 3. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

10 (a) PRESENTATION AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of
11 the House of Representatives and the President pro tem-
12 pore of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements
13 for the posthumous presentation, on behalf of the Con-
14 gress, of a gold medal of appropriate design in commemo-
15 ration of Clyde Kennard in recognition of his sacrifice for
16 education equality.

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

23 (c) AWARD OF MEDAL.—Following the presentation
24 of the gold medal referred to in subsection (a), the medal
25 shall be awarded to the Mississippi State Conference of

1 the National Association for the Advancement of Colored
2 People, where it shall be available for display or temporary
3 loan for display elsewhere, as appropriate.

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

5 (a) 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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