

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1908

To award a Congressional Gold Medal to Master Sergeant Rodrick “Roddie” Edmonds in recognition of his heroic actions during World War II.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 27, 2019

Mr. BURCHETT (for himself, Mr. DAVID P. ROE of Tennessee, Mr. FLEISCHMANN, Mr. DESJARLAIS, Mr. COOPER, Mr. JOHN W. ROSE of Tennessee, Mr. GREEN of Tennessee, Mr. KUSTOFF of Tennessee, and Mr. COHEN) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Financial Services

A BILL

To award a Congressional Gold Medal to Master Sergeant Rodrick “Roddie” Edmonds in recognition of his heroic actions during World War II.

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 “Master Sergeant
5 Roddie Edmonds Congressional Gold Medal Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) Rodrick W. Edmonds (in this Act referred
2 to as “Roddie Edmonds” or “Edmonds”) was born
3 in 1919 in South Knoxville, Tennessee, and grad-
4 uated from Knoxville High School in 1938.

5 (2) Roddie Edmonds was a Master Sergeant in
6 the United States Army and a member of the 422nd
7 Infantry Regiment while serving during World War
8 II.

9 (3) Roddie Edmonds landed in Europe in 1944
10 and fought to the border between Belgium and Ger-
11 many. In December of 1944, while fighting in the
12 Battle of the Bulge, Edmonds was captured by Nazi
13 forces and detained in Stalag IX–A, a prisoner of
14 war camp in Ziegenhain, Germany.

15 (4) Stalag IX–A was a site used to identify,
16 segregate, and remove Jewish soldiers from the gen-
17 eral population of prisoners of war and many of the
18 Jewish soldiers who were so removed were sent to
19 labor camps or murdered. Members of the Armed
20 Forces were warned of this policy and aware that
21 their fellow servicemen could be at risk.

22 (5) As the senior noncommissioned officer in
23 Stalag IX–A, Master Sergeant Edmonds was re-
24 sponsible for 1,275 members of the Armed Forces at
25 the camp. Approximately 1 month after the date on

1 which Edmonds was detained, Edmonds was di-
2 rected to order the Jewish-American soldiers under
3 his command to fall out in order to separate the
4 Jewish-American soldiers from their fellow prisoners.

5 (6) Disregarding the orders of the Nazis,
6 Roddie Edmonds commanded all of his men to fall
7 out and, the following morning, all of the 1,275
8 members of the Armed Forces under the command
9 of Edmonds stood outside of their prison barracks.

10 (7) Upon seeing the soldiers, a German officer
11 angrily shouted, “They cannot all be Jews!”, to
12 which Edmonds replied, “We are all Jews here”.

13 (8) The German officer took out his pistol and
14 pointed the gun at the head of Edmonds, but Ed-
15 monds refused to identify the Jewish soldiers. In-
16 stead, Edmonds responded, “According to the Gene-
17 va Convention, we only have to give our name, rank,
18 and serial number. If you shoot me, you will have
19 to shoot all of us and, after the war, you will be
20 tried for war crimes”.

21 (9) The German officer turned away from Ed-
22 monds and the other soldiers and left the scene. The
23 actions taken by Edmonds saved the lives of ap-
24 proximately 200 Jewish-American members of the
25 Armed Forces.

1 (10) Lester Tanner, a Jewish-American mem-
2 ber of the Armed Forces also captured during the
3 Battle of the Bulge, witnessed the incident and stat-
4 ed that, “There was no question in my mind, or that
5 of Master Sergeant Edmonds, that the Germans
6 were removing the Jewish prisoners from the general
7 population at great risk to their survival. The U.S.
8 Army’s standing command to its ranking officers in
9 POW camps is that you resist the enemy and care
10 for the safety of your men to the greatest extent
11 possible. Master Sergeant Edmonds, at the risk of
12 his immediate death, defied the Germans with the
13 unexpected consequences that the Jewish prisoners
14 were saved”.

15 (11) Edmonds survived 100 days in captivity
16 and returned home after the war. Later, Edmonds
17 served the United States in Korea as a member of
18 the National Guard. Edmonds died in 1985, but
19 never told his family or anyone else of his brave ac-
20 tions outside the barracks of Stalag IX–A during
21 World War II.

22 (12) Edmonds was posthumously recognized by
23 Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance
24 Center in Jerusalem, as “Righteous Among the Na-
25 tions”, the first member of the Armed Forces and

1 1 of only 5 people of the United States to be so rec-
2 ognized. Avner Shalev, Chairman of Yad Vashem,
3 announced the selection of Edmonds by saying,
4 “Master Sergeant Roddie Edmonds seemed like an
5 ordinary American soldier, but he had an extraor-
6 dinary sense of responsibility and dedication to his
7 fellow human beings. . . . The choices and actions
8 of Master Sergeant Edmonds set an example for his
9 fellow American soldiers as they stood united against
10 the barbaric evil of the Nazis”.

11 **SEC. 3. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

12 (a) AWARD AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of the
13 House of Representatives and the President pro tempore
14 of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements for the
15 posthumous award, on behalf of Congress, of a gold medal
16 of appropriate design to Roddie Edmonds in recognition
17 of his achievements and heroic actions during World War
18 II.

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

24 (c) PRESENTATION AND AWARD OF MEDAL.—The
25 gold medal referred to in subsection (a) shall be presented,

1 and following the presentation awarded, to the next of kin
2 of Roddie Edmonds.

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

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

10 **SEC. 5. STATUS OF MEDALS.**

11 (a) NATIONAL MEDALS.—The medals struck under
12 this Act are national medals for purposes of chapter 51
13 of title 31, United States Code.

14 (b) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of sections
15 5134 and 5136 of title 31, United States Code, all medals
16 struck under this Act shall be considered to be numismatic
17 items.

○