

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 2861

To award a Congressional Gold Medal to Billie Jean King, an American icon, in recognition of a remarkable life devoted to championing equal rights for all, in sports and in society.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

SEPTEMBER 20, 2023

Mrs. GILLIBRAND (for herself, Mrs. CAPITO, and Ms. SINEMA) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs

A BILL

To award a Congressional Gold Medal to Billie Jean King, an American icon, in recognition of a remarkable life devoted to championing equal rights for all, in sports and in society.

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 “Billie Jean King Con-
5 gressional Gold Medal Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) Billie Jean King, born Billie Jean Moffitt
2 on November 22, 1943, in Long Beach, California,
3 demonstrated athletic prowess from a young age.
4 She was introduced to tennis at the age of 11, and
5 soon after, Billie Jean purchased her first tennis
6 racket using money she earned working various jobs
7 in her neighborhood.

8 (2) Billie Jean broke numerous barriers to be-
9 come a number one professional tennis player. She
10 dominated women’s tennis with 39 Grand Slam sin-
11 gles, doubles, and mixed doubles titles, including a
12 record 20 championships at Wimbledon. She also
13 was a member of 3 World TeamTennis champion-
14 ship teams.

15 (3) After growing in prominence, Billie Jean
16 used her platform as a celebrity to fight for equal
17 rights and opportunities for equality for all in
18 sports, and society, in the United States.

19 (4) Billie Jean played an instrumental role in
20 the passage of title IX of the Education Amend-
21 ments Act of 1972 (20 U.S.C. 1681 et seq.), a law
22 that mandates equal funding for women’s and men’s
23 sports programs in schools and colleges. This legisla-
24 tion has unlocked a world of opportunities for girls
25 and women in education and sports.

1 (5) During Billie Jean's career, the pay dif-
2 ference between prize money for men and women in
3 tennis continued to expand. By the early 1970s, the
4 pay gap in prize money reached ratios of as much
5 as 12 to 1. Fewer and fewer tournaments were
6 hosting women's events. Billie Jean harnessed the
7 energy of the women's rights movement to create a
8 women's tennis tour that would elevate women's ten-
9 nis and establish pay equity within the sport. Along
10 with 8 other women tennis players, she formed an
11 independent women's professional tennis circuit, the
12 Virginia Slims Series.

13 (6) In 1973, Billie Jean founded the Women's
14 Tennis Association, today's principal governing body
15 for women's professional tennis.

16 (7) Billie Jean helped found womenSports mag-
17 azine and founded the Women's Sports Foundation.
18 Both have been at the forefront of advancing wom-
19 en's voice in sports.

20 (8) Billie Jean successfully lobbied for equal
21 prize money for men and women at the 1973 US
22 Open Tennis Championships. It would take another
23 34 years for the other 3 major tournaments to all
24 offer equal prize money.

1 (9) In 1973, Billie Jean played a tennis match
2 against Bobby Riggs, a former World Number 1
3 player who sought to undermine the credibility and
4 prominence of women in sports. Billie Jean defeated
5 Riggs in what became a firm declaration of women's
6 role in sports and society.

7 (10) Billie Jean King was the first tennis play-
8 er and woman to be named Sports Illustrated's
9 Sportsperson of the Year, one of the "100 Most Im-
10 portant Americans of the 20th Century" by LIFE
11 magazine, was the recipient of the 1999 Arthur
12 Ashe Award for Courage, and has been admitted to
13 the International Women's Sports Hall of Fame, the
14 International Tennis Hall of Fame, and the National
15 Women's Hall of Fame.

16 (11) In 2006, the United States Tennis Asso-
17 ciation recognized Billie Jean's immeasurable impact
18 on the sport of tennis by renaming the site of the
19 US Open in her honor as the USTA Billie Jean
20 King National Tennis Center, which is located in
21 Flushing Meadows Corona Park in Queens, New
22 York. This was the first time a major sporting com-
23 plex was named after a woman.

24 (12) In 2009, Billie Jean was awarded the
25 Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian

1 honor in the United States, by President Barack
2 Obama for her impactful work advocating for the
3 rights of women. She was the first female athlete to
4 receive this honor.

5 (13) In 2014, Billie Jean King founded the Bil-
6 lie Jean King Leadership Initiative to empower com-
7 panies and individuals to create inclusive work envi-
8 ronments that celebrate and promote diversity and
9 equality in the workplace.

10 (14) In 2020, Fed Cup, the world cup of wom-
11 en's tennis, was renamed the Billie Jean King Cup,
12 making it the first global team competition to be
13 named after a woman.

14 (15) Billie Jean King's extraordinary courage,
15 leadership, and activism helped propel the women's
16 movement forward, and open doors for countless
17 people in the United States. On and off the court,
18 Billie Jean has served as an inspiration to millions
19 of people the world over. Few women and men have
20 had a greater impact on their sport and on our soci-
21 ety than Billie Jean King.

22 **SEC. 3. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

23 (a) PRESENTATION AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of
24 the House of Representatives and the President pro tem-
25 pore of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements

1 for the presentation, on behalf of Congress, of a gold
2 medal of appropriate design to Billie Jean King, in rec-
3 ognition of her contribution to the United States and her
4 courageous and groundbreaking leadership advancing
5 equal rights for women in athletics, education, and our
6 society.

7 (b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For purposes of the
8 presentation described in subsection (a), the Secretary of
9 the Treasury (referred to in this Act as the “Secretary”)
10 shall strike a gold medal with suitable emblems, devices,
11 and inscriptions to be determined by the Secretary. The
12 design shall bear an image of, and inscription of the name
13 of, Billie Jean King.

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

15 The Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in
16 bronze of the gold medal struck pursuant to section 3 at
17 a price sufficient to cover the costs of the medals, includ-
18 ing labor, materials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead
19 expenses.

20 **SEC. 5. STATUS OF MEDALS.**

21 (a) NATIONAL MEDALS.—Medals struck under this
22 Act are national medals for purposes of chapter 51 of title
23 31, United States Code.

24 (b) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of section
25 5134 and section 5136 of title 31, United States Code,

1 all medals struck under this Act shall be considered to
2 be numismatic items.

3 **SEC. 6. AUTHORITY TO USE FUND AMOUNTS; PROCEEDS OF**
4 **SALE.**

5 (a) **AUTHORITY TO USE FUND AMOUNTS.**—There is
6 authorized to be charged against the United States Mint
7 Public Enterprise Fund such amounts as may be nec-
8 essary to pay for the costs of the medals struck under
9 this Act.

10 (b) **PROCEEDS OF SALE.**—Amounts received from the
11 sale of duplicate bronze medals authorized under section
12 4 shall be deposited into the United States Mint Public
13 Enterprise Fund.

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