

117TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# S. 2647

To award a Congressional gold medal to the 369th Infantry Regiment, commonly known as the “Harlem Hellfighters”, in recognition of their bravery and outstanding service during World War I.

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## IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

AUGUST 5, 2021

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

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## A BILL

To award a Congressional gold medal to the 369th Infantry Regiment, commonly known as the “Harlem Hellfighters”, in recognition of their bravery and outstanding service during World War I.

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 “Harlem Hellfighters  
5 Congressional Gold Medal Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1           (1) When the United States officially entered  
2 World War I in April 1917, the Armed Forces were  
3 still segregated, even though African-American sol-  
4 diers had served and distinguished themselves in  
5 every war since the Revolutionary War, and even the  
6 Colonial Wars preceding the American Revolution.

7           (2) After several years of advocacy and debate,  
8 in 1916 the State of New York authorized the re-  
9 cruitment of the 15th New York National Guard  
10 Regiment, which was called to Federal service on  
11 July 25, 1917, soon after arriving for training at  
12 Camp Whitman, New York.

13           (3) The 15th completed its basic military prac-  
14 tice training at Camp Whitman, New York.

15           (4) To receive combat training, the 15th re-  
16 ported, on October 8, 1917, to Camp Wadsworth, in  
17 Spartanburg, South Carolina, where it experienced  
18 many incidents of racial discrimination.

19           (5) Consequently, the government agreed to re-  
20 move the 15th from Camp Wadsworth, but, instead  
21 of receiving further training, the regiment began  
22 preparing for deployment to France in November.

23           (6) The 15th arrived in Saint Nazaire, France,  
24 on January 1, 1918, where it was redesignated the  
25 369th Infantry Regiment.

1           (7) Partly because many White soldiers within  
2           the American Expeditionary Forces (hereinafter, the  
3           “AEF”) refused to perform combat duty with Black  
4           soldiers, members of the 369th were initially as-  
5           signed manual labor tasks, such as loading and un-  
6           loading supplies, and constructing roads and rail-  
7           roads.

8           (8) After receiving pressure from the 369th reg-  
9           imental commander about not having a combat mis-  
10          sion, the AEF attached the 369th to the French  
11          Fourth Army.

12          (9) By mid-March of 1918, the 369th went to  
13          the Argonne Forest with the French 16th Division  
14          for training and soon entered the trenches.

15          (10) The 369th encountered its first German  
16          soldiers in combat in April, 1918.

17          (11) In May of 1918, Private Henry Johnson  
18          of the 369th received the French Croix de Guerre,  
19          with Palm, for extraordinary valor, becoming one of  
20          the first American soldiers to be awarded this honor.

21          (12) Johnson also belatedly received a Purple  
22          Heart, was awarded the Distinguished Service  
23          Cross, and, in 2015, was awarded the Medal of  
24          Honor.

1           (13) Throughout the remainder of the spring  
2           and into the summer the 369th served at Minacourt,  
3           in the Champagne-Marne Defensive, and during the  
4           Aisne-Marne Offensive in support of the French  
5           161st Infantry Division.

6           (14) As summer turned to autumn, the 369th  
7           went on to participate in the Meuse-Argonne offen-  
8           sive, where it captured the important village of  
9           Sechault despite sustaining severe losses.

10           (15) On October 14, 1918, the 369th advanced  
11           to Alsace.

12           (16) On November 20, 1918, the 369th reached  
13           the banks of the Rhine River as part of the French  
14           Army of Occupation, the first Allied unit to do so.

15           (17) The 369th was relieved of its assignment  
16           with the French 161st Division in December, 1918,  
17           and elements of the regiment sailed for New York  
18           in late January and early February, 1919.

19           (18) The 369th Infantry Regiment received a  
20           parade up 5th Avenue in New York City on Feb-  
21           ruary 17, 1919, receiving applause and cheers from  
22           hundreds of thousands of onlookers.

23           (19) The 369th was demobilized on February  
24           28, 1919.

1           (20) Over 170 individual members of the 369th  
2           received the Croix de Guerre, many were awarded  
3           the Distinguished Service Cross, and the 369th was  
4           awarded a unit citation.

5           (21) It is generally believed that the 369th was  
6           dubbed the “Harlem Hellfighters” by German sol-  
7           diers, who found the men to be incredibly deter-  
8           mined and courageous in battle.

9           (22) The 369th was the first regiment of Afri-  
10          can Americans to deploy overseas during World War  
11          I and spent 191 days on the front line in World War  
12          I, more than any other American regimental sized  
13          unit.

14          (23) The 369th never lost a foot of ground nor  
15          had a man taken prisoner, despite suffering a high  
16          number of casualties.

17 **SEC. 3. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

18          (a) AWARD AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of the  
19          House of Representatives and the President pro tempore  
20          of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements for the  
21          award, on behalf of the Congress, of a gold medal of ap-  
22          propriate design to the 369th Infantry Regiment, com-  
23          monly known as the “Harlem Hellfighters”, in recognition  
24          of their bravery and outstanding service during World  
25          War I.

1 (b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For the purposes of the  
2 award referred to in subsection (a), the Secretary of the  
3 Treasury shall strike the gold medal with suitable em-  
4 blems, devices, and inscriptions, to be determined by the  
5 Secretary.

6 (c) SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.—

7 (1) IN GENERAL.—Following the award of the  
8 gold medal in honor of the 369th Infantry Regiment,  
9 the “Harlem Hellfighters”, the gold medal shall be  
10 given to the Smithsonian Institution, where it will be  
11 displayed as appropriate and made available for re-  
12 search.

13 (2) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of  
14 Congress that the Smithsonian Institution should  
15 make the gold medal awarded pursuant to this Act  
16 available for display elsewhere, particularly at other  
17 locations associated with the Harlem Hellfighters.

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

19 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may strike and sell  
20 duplicates in bronze of the gold medal struck under sec-  
21 tion 3, at a price sufficient to cover the costs of the bronze  
22 medals, including labor, materials, dies, use of machinery,  
23 and overhead expenses.

24 (b) PROCEEDS OF SALES.—The amounts received  
25 from the sale of duplicate medals under subsection (a)

1 shall be deposited in the United States Mint Public Enter-  
2 prise Fund.

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

8 **SEC. 5. STATUS OF MEDALS.**

9 The gold medal struck pursuant to this Act is a na-  
10 tional medal for purposes of chapter 51 of title 31, United  
11 States Code.

12 **SEC. 6. DETERMINATION OF BUDGETARY EFFECTS.**

13 The budgetary effects of this Act, for the purpose of  
14 complying with the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010,  
15 shall be determined by reference to the latest statement  
16 titled “Budgetary Effects of PAYGO Legislation” for this  
17 Act, submitted for printing in the Congressional Record  
18 by the Chairman of the House Budget Committee, pro-  
19 vided that such statement has been submitted prior to the  
20 vote on passage.

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