

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2740

To posthumously award a Congressional Gold Medal to Rabbi Michael Ber Weissmandl in recognition of his acts of valor during World War II.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 25, 2017

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ (for herself and Mr. MAST) introduced the following bill;
which was referred to the Committee on Financial Services

A BILL

To posthumously award a Congressional Gold Medal to Rabbi Michael Ber Weissmandl in recognition of his acts of valor 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 “Rabbi Michael Ber
5 Weissmandl Congressional Gold Medal Act of 2017”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

8 (1) Rabbi Michael Ber Weissmandl was born in
9 Hungary on October 25, 1903, later moving to Slo-

1 vakia to study under Rabbi Shumel Dvoid Ungar in
2 Nitra.

3 (2) During his time in Nitra, he quickly became
4 a senior figure within the local Jewish community
5 and Yeshiva.

6 (3) Weissmandl was responsible for some of the
7 daring efforts to save the Jewish people of Slovakia
8 from the Holocaust, which include the establishment
9 of a “Working Group”, an underground organization
10 that raised funds to negotiate ransom with German
11 and Slovakian officials in order to delay mass depor-
12 tations.

13 (4) During the Nazi regime, Weissmandl used
14 his contacts from England to obtain visas, becoming
15 one of the first to actively protect people of Jewish
16 ancestry in Europe.

17 (5) Weissmandl also wrote telegrams to gen-
18 erate awareness of the Jewish people’s plight and
19 encouraged other strategic approaches to stop the
20 Holocaust, including the bombing of railroad tunnels
21 to prevent the transportation of persons to con-
22 centration camps.

23 (6) Weissmandl established a Working Group—
24 a wide variety of people from different political and

1 ideological spectrums—whose common goal was to
2 save people from the “Final Solution”.

3 (7) The Working Group was one of the first to
4 document in writing the accounts of Auschwitz
5 Escapees in a document widely referred to as the
6 “Auschwitz Protocols”.

7 (8) Weissmandl himself later translated the ini-
8 tial documentation from German to Hebrew and in-
9 cluded a widely known addendum that pleaded for
10 action.

11 (9) Weissmandl wrote the first known appeal
12 for the use of Allied air resources to disrupt the Hol-
13 ocaust.

14 (10) In 1942 when Slovakia started deportation
15 for “resettlement”, Rabbi Weissmandl was the first
16 to inform the Working Group that people were being
17 murdered and not sent to work as originally claimed.

18 (11) Rabbi Weissmandl also played an instru-
19 mental role in Solomon Schoenfeld Kindertransport
20 rescue, helping save hundreds of lives.

21 (12) Rabbi Weissmandl came to America and in
22 1945 immediately got to work to establish a home
23 and Yeshiva for Holocaust survivors. The Yeshiva of
24 Nitra he established in Mount Kisco, New York, was

1 the first Yeshiva campus in America and became
2 and example that other institutions followed.

3 (13) Rabbi Weissmandl has significantly influ-
4 enced the flourishing communities of Talmudic
5 scholars in Brooklyn, New York, and generally
6 across the United States.

7 **SEC. 3. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

8 (a) PRESENTATION AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of
9 the House of Representatives and the President pro tem-
10 pore of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements
11 for the presentation, on behalf of Congress, of a gold
12 medal of appropriate design, to Rabbi Michael Ber
13 Weissmandl in recognition of his acts of valor during
14 World War II.

15 (b) PARTICIPATION BY WEISSMANDL COMMITTEE.—
16 For the purpose of the presentation referred to in sub-
17 section (a), the Speaker and President pro tempore shall
18 ensure that the Weissmandl Committee may accept the
19 medal on behalf of Michael Ber Weissmandl.

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

1 (d) TRANSFER OF MEDAL AFTER PRESENTATION.—
2 Following the presentation of the gold medal in honor of
3 Michael Ber Weissmandl under subsection (a), the gold
4 medal shall be given to Samuel Dovid Weissmandl or,
5 should he not be present, to Rabbi Menachem Meir
6 Weissmandl.

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

8 Under such regulations as the Secretary may pre-
9 scribe, the Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in
10 bronze of the gold medal struck pursuant to section 2 at
11 a price sufficient to cover the cost of the bronze medals
12 (including labor, materials, dies, use of machinery, and
13 overhead expenses) and the cost of the gold medal.

14 **SEC. 5. NATIONAL MEDAL.**

15 (a) NATIONAL MEDAL.—The gold medal struck
16 under this Act is a national medals for purposes of chapter
17 51 of title 31, United States Code.

18 (b) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of sections
19 5134 and 5136 of title 31, United States Code, all medals
20 struck under this Act shall be considered to be numismatic
21 items.

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