

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3123

To award a Congressional gold medal, collectively, to the First Rhode Island Regiment, in recognition of their dedicated service during the Revolutionary War.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 29, 2017

Mr. CICILLINE (for himself, Ms. ADAMS, Mr. BEYER, Mr. BISHOP of Georgia, Mr. BUTTERFIELD, Ms. CLARKE of New York, Mr. COSTA, Mrs. DINGELL, Ms. JACKSON LEE, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Mr. JONES, Mr. LANGEVIN, Mr. SEAN PATRICK MALONEY of New York, Mr. MCGOVERN, Mr. SOTO, and Mr. SWALWELL of California) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Financial Services, and in addition to the Committee on House Administration, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To award a Congressional gold medal, collectively, to the First Rhode Island Regiment, in recognition of their dedicated service during the Revolutionary War.

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 “First Rhode Island
5 Regiment Congressional Gold Medal Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

2 Congress makes the following findings:

3 (1) During the winter of Valley Forge, from
4 1777–1778, the Continental Army had difficulty re-
5 cruiting the necessary quotas of men set by the Con-
6 gress.

7 (2) At the same time, the State of Rhode Island
8 was ordered to supply two battalions while faced
9 with the occupation of the City of Newport by the
10 British.

11 (3) In January 1778, at the urging of Brigadier
12 General James Varnum, General George Washington
13 wrote to Governor Nicholas Cooke of the State of
14 Rhode Island requesting assistance recruiting men
15 for the Continental Line.

16 (4) On February 14, 1778, the Rhode Island
17 General Assembly voted to allow the enlistment of
18 “every able-bodied negro, mulatto, or Indian man
19 slave”.

20 (5) In addition, the Rhode Island General As-
21 sembly provided that any enlisted slave “upon his
22 passing muster before Colonel Christopher Greene,
23 be immediately discharged from the service of his
24 master or mistress, and be absolutely free as though
25 he had never been incumbered and be incumbered
26 with any kind of servitude or slavery.”.

1 (6) As a result, between February 1778 and
2 June 1778, Colonel Christopher Greene, Lt. Colonel
3 Jeremiah Olney and Major Samuel Ward recruited
4 almost 200 men of African and Native American de-
5 scend who formed the core of the First Rhode Island
6 Regiment.

7 (7) The First Rhode Island Regiment became
8 among the first units in American History in which
9 men of every race and ethnicity were recruited to
10 serve.

11 (8) On August 28, 1778, at the Battle of
12 Rhode Island, following an attempted siege of Brit-
13 ish-occupied Newport along with the newly allied
14 French fleet, the First Rhode Island Regiment acted
15 heroically in holding back Hessian forces and caus-
16 ing them to retreat.

17 (9) During the Battle of Rhode Island, the
18 First Rhode Island Regiment's losses included three
19 killed, nine wounded and eleven missing soldiers.

20 (10) For an additional 5 years, the First Rhode
21 Island Regiment fought bravely to win American
22 independence including at Fort Oswego, Saratoga,
23 and Yorktown.

24 (11) On June 13, 1783, at Saratoga, the First
25 Rhode Island Regiment was demobilized.

1 (12) Their commander, Colonel Jeremiah
2 Olney, praised the Regiment for “faithfully pre-
3 serving in the best of causes, in every stage of serv-
4 ice, with unexampled fortitude and patience through
5 all the danger and toils of a long and severe war”.

6 (13) Afterwards, some veterans of the First
7 Rhode Island Regiment had to consistently resist ef-
8 forts at re-enslavement and fought for back wages
9 from the Rhode Island General Assembly.

10 (14) According to the Rhode Island State Ar-
11 chives, the First Rhode Island Regiment included at
12 least the following soldiers: Babcock, Priamus (Pri-
13 mus); Bent, Prince; Bours, Cato; Brown, Priamus
14 (Primus); Burk, Africa; Burroughs, John; Car-
15 penter, Cudgo; Champlin, Dick; Champlin, Jack;
16 Champlin, July; Champlin, Newport; Champlin,
17 Sharper; Champlin, York; Clark, James;
18 Coddington, Jack; Fones, Jack; Gardner, Cuff;
19 Gardner, Hercules; Gardner, Minkl; Gardner,
20 Preamus (Primus); Gardner, Rutter; Gray, Ebe-
21 nezer; Green, Cuff; Greene, Cato; Greene, Jack;
22 Greene, Pero; Greene, William; Hammond, Prince;
23 Harriss, Cesar; Hazard, Backus; Hazard, Jabin;
24 Hazard, Jacob; Hazard, Peter; Hazard, Peter;
25 Lefavour, Thom; Mason, Warsen; Mawney, Cyrus;

1 Minturn, Jack; Mowrey, Pero; Nichols, Thomas;
 2 Perry, Ganset; Phillips, Philow; Pierce, Titus; Pot-
 3 ter, David; Randall, Prince; Rhodes, Bristol; Rhodes,
 4 Priamus; Rhodes, Richard; Rhodes, Samuel; Rich-
 5 mond, Ebenezer; Robinson, Mingo; Rodman, Isaac;
 6 Rodman, Mingo; Rodman, Prince; Rose, Cesar;
 7 Saltonstall, Brittain; Saunders, Sampson; Sheldon,
 8 Cesar; Slave; Slave; Smith, Juba; Sweeling, Query;
 9 Talbot, Sigby; Tanner, Quam; Tillinghast, Cuff;
 10 Updike, Cesar; Updike, Moses; Vaughan, Prince;
 11 Vernon, Cato; Watson, Fortune; Wells, Cesar;
 12 Wickes, Nat; and Willbour, Boston.

13 **SEC. 3. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

14 (a) AWARD AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of the
 15 House of Representatives and the President pro tempore
 16 of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements for the
 17 award, on behalf of the Congress, of a single gold medal
 18 of appropriate design to the First Rhode Island Regiment,
 19 collectively in recognition of their dedicated service during
 20 the Revolutionary War.

21 (b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For the purposes of the
 22 award referred to in subsection (a), the Secretary of the
 23 Treasury (hereafter in this Act referred to as the “Sec-
 24 retary”) shall strike the gold medal with suitable emblems,

1 devices, and inscriptions, to be determined by the Sec-
2 retary.

3 (c) SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.—

4 (1) IN GENERAL.—Following the award of the
5 gold medal in honor of the First Rhode Island Regi-
6 ment of the Revolutionary War under subsection (a),
7 the gold medal shall be given to the Smithsonian In-
8 stitution, where it will be displayed as appropriate
9 and made available for research.

10 (2) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of
11 Congress that the Smithsonian Institution should
12 make the gold medal received under paragraph (1)
13 available for display elsewhere, particularly at other
14 appropriate locations associated with the First
15 Rhode Island Regiment of the Revolutionary War.

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

17 Under such regulations as the Secretary may pre-
18 scribe, the Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in
19 bronze of the gold medal struck under section 3, at a price
20 sufficient to cover the costs of the medals, including labor,
21 materials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses.

22 **SEC. 5. STATUS OF MEDALS.**

23 (a) NATIONAL MEDALS.—Medals struck pursuant to
24 this Act are national medals for purposes of chapter 51
25 of title 31, United States Code.

1 (b) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of section
2 5134 of title 31, United States Code, all medals struck
3 under this Act shall be considered to be numismatic items.

○