

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 2643

To posthumously award a Congressional Gold Medal to Judge Damon Jerome Keith.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

OCTOBER 17, 2019

Mr. PETERS introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs

A BILL

To posthumously award a Congressional Gold Medal to Judge Damon Jerome Keith.

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 “Judge Damon Keith
5 Congressional Gold Medal Act of 2019”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

8 (1) Judge Damon Keith was born on July 4,
9 1922, in Detroit, Michigan, and died at his home in

1 Detroit, Michigan, surrounded by family and loved
2 ones, on April 28, 2019.

3 (2) Judge Damon Keith received a bachelor of
4 arts from West Virginia State University, a juris
5 doctor from Howard University School of Law, and
6 a master of laws from Wayne State University Law
7 School.

8 (3) Judge Damon Keith served in the United
9 States Army from 1943 to 1946 when he was dis-
10 charged as a sergeant.

11 (4) Judge Damon Keith devoted his life to pub-
12 lic service and served more than 50 years on the
13 Federal bench where he was a champion for civil
14 rights and individual liberties for all.

15 (5) Judge Damon Keith served as one of the
16 first cochairman of the Michigan Civil Rights Com-
17 mission at its inception in 1964 where he worked to
18 oppose discrimination and enforce equal protection
19 under the law.

20 (6) Judge Damon Keith was first nominated to
21 the United States District Court for the Eastern
22 District of Michigan in 1967 by President Lyndon
23 Johnson where he served as the first African-Amer-
24 ican chief judge of the court from 1975 to 1977.

1 (7) Judge Damon Keith became the sixth Afri-
2 can American to serve on the United States Court
3 of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit when he was nomi-
4 nated by President Jimmy Carter in 1977, where he
5 served as senior judge on the court from May 1,
6 1995, until his passing.

7 (8) Judge Damon Keith in a 1970 decision
8 upheld the civil rights of Pontiac, Michigan, students
9 when he ordered a bus policy and new boundaries in
10 Pontiac, Michigan, schools in order to end racial
11 segregation.

12 (9) Judge Damon Keith defended the protec-
13 tions guaranteed under the Fourth Amendment to
14 the Constitution of the United States when he held
15 in *United States v. Sinclair*, 321 F. Supp. 1074
16 (E.D. Mich. 1971), a landmark decision upheld by
17 the Supreme Court of the United States, that the
18 United States Government must obtain a warrant
19 before beginning domestic electronic surveillance.

20 (10) Judge Damon Keith ruled against housing
21 discrimination in *Garrett v. City of Hamtramck*, 394
22 F. Supp. 1151 (E.D. Mich. 1975), where he ordered
23 the city of Hamtramck, Michigan, to relocate 500
24 African Americans who had been displaced by feder-
25 ally supported urban renewal projects.

1 (11) Judge Damon Keith worked throughout
2 his career to safeguard the civil liberties, civil rights,
3 and voting rights of all people of the United States
4 while opposing housing, job, and racial discrimina-
5 tion.

6 (12) Judge Damon Keith has received more
7 than 40 honorary degrees as well as the Spingarn
8 Medal from the National Association for the Ad-
9 vancement of Colored People, the highest honor of
10 the organization for distinguished achievement, and
11 the Edward J. Devitt Distinguished Service to Jus-
12 tice Award, the highest award that can be bestowed
13 on a member of the Federal judiciary.

14 (13) Judge Damon Keith inspired generations
15 of lawyers that served under him as clerks and influ-
16 enced the State of Michigan for decades.

17 (14) Judge Damon Keith, who coined the
18 phrase “democracies die behind closed doors”, will
19 be remembered for his dedication to upholding the
20 Constitution of the United States and commitment
21 to justice.

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 posthumous presentation, on behalf of Congress,
2 of a gold medal of appropriate design in commemoration
3 of Judge Damon Keith.

4 (b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For purposes of the
5 presentation referred to in subsection (a), the Secretary
6 of the Treasury (referred to in this Act as the “Sec-
7 retary”) shall strike a gold medal with suitable emblems,
8 devices, and inscriptions, to be determined by the Sec-
9 retary.

10 (c) AWARD OF MEDAL.—

11 (1) IN GENERAL.—After the award of the gold
12 medal referred to in subsection (a), the gold medal
13 shall be given to the Smithsonian Institution, where
14 it shall be displayed as appropriate and made avail-
15 able for research.

16 (2) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of
17 Congress that the Smithsonian Institution should
18 make the gold medal received under paragraph (1)
19 available for display elsewhere, particularly at other
20 locations and events associated with Judge Damon
21 Keith.

22 **SEC. 4. DUPLICATE MEDALS.**

23 The Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in
24 bronze of the gold medal struck under section 3 under
25 such regulations as the Secretary may prescribe, at a price

1 sufficient to cover the cost, including labor, materials,
2 dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses, of the gold
3 medal and any such duplicates.

4 **SEC. 5. STATUS OF MEDALS.**

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

8 (b) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of section
9 5134 of title 31, United States Code, all medals struck
10 under this Act shall be considered to be numismatic items.

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