

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3642

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.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 28, 2021

Mr. SUOZZI (for himself, Mrs. BEATTY, Mr. ESPAILLAT, Ms. ADAMS, Mr. ADERHOLT, Mr. AGUILAR, Mr. ALLRED, Mr. AMODEI, Mr. ARRINGTON, Mr. AUCHINCLOSS, Mrs. AXNE, Mr. BABIN, Mr. BAIRD, Mr. BALDERSON, Mr. BARR, Ms. BARRAGÁN, Ms. BASS, Mr. BERA, Mr. BERGMAN, Ms. HERRERA BEUTLER, Mr. BEYER, Mr. BISHOP of Georgia, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Ms. BONAMICI, Mr. BOST, Ms. BOURDEAUX, Mr. BOWMAN, Mr. BRENDAN F. BOYLE of Pennsylvania, Mr. BRADY, Mr. BROWN, Ms. BROWNLEY, Mr. BUCK, Mr. BURCHETT, Ms. BUSH, Mrs. BUSTOS, Mr. BUTTERFIELD, Mr. CARBAJAL, Mr. CÁRDENAS, Mr. CARSON, Mr. CARTER of Louisiana, Mr. CARTWRIGHT, Mr. CASE, Ms. CASTOR of Florida, Mr. CASTRO of Texas, Mr. CAWTHORN, Ms. CHENEY, Ms. CHU, Mr. CICILLINE, Ms. CLARK of Massachusetts, Ms. CLARKE of New York, Mr. CLEAVER, Mr. CLINE, Mr. CLYBURN, Mr. COHEN, Mr. COLE, Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN, Mr. CONNOLLY, Mr. COOPER, Mr. CORREA, Mr. COSTA, Mr. COURTNEY, Ms. CRAIG, Mr. CRIST, Mr. CROW, Mr. CUELLAR, Ms. DAVIDS of Kansas, Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois, Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois, Ms. DEAN, Mr. DEFazio, Ms. DEGETTE, Ms. DELAURO, Ms. DELBENE, Mr. DELGADO, Mrs. DEMINGS, Mr. DESAULNIER, Mr. DEUTCH, Mrs. DINGELL, Mr. DOGGETT, Mr. MICHAEL F. DOYLE of Pennsylvania, Mr. DUNCAN, Mr. DUNN, Ms. ESCOBAR, Ms. ESHOO, Mr. ESTES, Mr. EVANS, Mr. FEENSTRA, Mr. FERGUSON, Mr. FITZPATRICK, Mr. FLEISCHMANN, Mrs. FLETCHER, Mr. FOSTER, Mr. FORTENBERRY, Ms. LOIS FRANKEL of Florida, Mr. GALLEGRO, Mr. GALLAGHER, Mr. GARAMENDI, Mr. GARBARINO, Mr. GARCÍA of Illinois, Ms. GARCIA of Texas, Mr. GOLDEN, Mr. GIMENEZ, Mr. GOHMERT, Mr. GOMEZ, Mr. GONZALEZ of Ohio, Mr. VICENTE GONZALEZ of Texas, Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN, Mr. GOSAR, Mr. GOTTHEIMER, Ms. GRANGER, Mr. GREEN of Texas, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. GROTHMAN, Mr. GUEST, Mr. HAGEDORN, Mr. HARDER of California, Mrs. HARTZLER, Mrs. HAYES, Ms. HERRELL, Mr. HIGGINS of New York, Mr. HIMES, Mr. HILL, Mrs. HINSON, Mr. HORSFORD, Mr. HUDSON, Mr. HUFFMAN, Mr. HUIZENGA, Mr. ISSA, Ms. JACKSON LEE, Mr. JACOBS of New York, Ms. JACOBS of California, Ms.

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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:

8 (1) When the United States officially entered
9 World War I in April 1917, the Armed Forces were
10 still segregated, even though African-American sol-
11 diers had served and distinguished themselves in
12 every war since the Revolutionary War, and even the
13 Colonial Wars preceding the American Revolution.

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

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

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

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

9 (6) The 15th arrived in Saint Nazaire, France,
10 on January 1, 1918, where it was redesignated the
11 369th Infantry Regiment.

12 (7) Partly because many White soldiers within
13 the American Expeditionary Forces (hereinafter, the
14 “AEF”) refused to perform combat duty with Black
15 soldiers, members of the 369th were initially as-
16 signed manual labor tasks, such as loading and un-
17 loading supplies, and constructing roads and rail-
18 roads.

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

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

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

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

7 (12) Johnson also belatedly received a Purple
8 Heart, was awarded the Distinguished Service
9 Cross, and in, 2015, was awarded the Medal of
10 Honor.

11 (13) Throughout the remainder of the spring
12 and into the summer the 369th served at Minacourt,
13 in the Champagne-Marne Defensive, and during the
14 Aisne-Marne Offensive in support of the French
15 161st Infantry Division.

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

20 (15) On October 14, 1918, the 369th advanced
21 to Alsace.

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

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

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

9 (19) The 369th was demobilized on February
10 28, 1919.

11 (20) Over 170 individual members of the 369th
12 received the Croix de Guerre, many were awarded
13 the Distinguished Service Cross, and the 369th was
14 awarded a unit citation.

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

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

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

4 **SEC. 3. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

5 (a) AWARD AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of the
6 House of Representatives and the President pro tempore
7 of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements for the
8 award, on behalf of the Congress, of a single gold medal
9 of appropriate design to the 369th Infantry Regiment,
10 commonly known as the “Harlem Hellfighters”, in rec-
11 ognition of their bravery and outstanding service during
12 World War I.

13 (b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For the purposes of the
14 award referred to in subsection (a), the Secretary of the
15 Treasury shall strike the gold medal with suitable em-
16 blems, devices, and inscriptions, to be determined by the
17 Secretary.

18 (c) SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.—

19 (1) IN GENERAL.—Following the award of the
20 gold medal under subsection (a), the gold medal
21 shall be given to the Smithsonian Institution, where
22 it will be displayed as appropriate and made avail-
23 able for research.

24 (2) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of
25 Congress that the Smithsonian Institution should

1 make the gold medal received under this Act avail-
2 able for display elsewhere, particularly at other loca-
3 tions and events associated with the Harlem
4 Hellfighters.

5 **SEC. 4. DUPLICATE MEDALS.**

6 Under such regulations as the Secretary of the Treas-
7 ury may prescribe, the Secretary may strike and sell dupli-
8 cates in bronze of the gold medal struck under section
9 3(b), at a price sufficient to cover the costs of the medals,
10 including labor, materials, dies, use of machinery, and
11 overhead expenses.

12 **SEC. 5. STATUS OF MEDALS.**

13 Medals struck pursuant to this Act are national med-
14 als for purposes of chapter 51 of title 31, United States
15 Code.

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