

109<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS  
1<sup>ST</sup> SESSION

# H. R. 1259

To authorize the President to award a gold medal on behalf of the Congress, collectively, to the Tuskegee Airmen in recognition of their unique military record, which inspired revolutionary reform in the Armed Forces.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 10, 2005

Mr. RANGEL (for himself, Mr. HASTINGS of Florida, Mr. FILNER, Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, Mr. OWENS, Ms. CARSON, Mr. TOWNS, Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida, Mr. CUMMINGS, Mr. PAYNE, Mr. SCHIFF, Mr. MEEKS of New York, and Mrs. CHRISTENSEN) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Financial Services

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## A BILL

To authorize the President to award a gold medal on behalf of the Congress, collectively, to the Tuskegee Airmen in recognition of their unique military record, which inspired revolutionary reform in the Armed Forces.

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. FINDINGS.**

4       The Congress finds the following:

5               (1) In 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt  
6       overruled his top generals and ordered the creation  
7       of an all Black flight training program. President

1 Roosevelt took this action one day after the NAACP  
2 filed suit on behalf of Howard University student  
3 Yancy Williams and others in Federal court to force  
4 the Department of War to accept Black pilot train-  
5 ees. Yancy Williams had a civilian pilot's license and  
6 had earned an engineering degree. Years later,  
7 Major Yancy Williams participated in an air surveil-  
8 lance project created by President Dwight D. Eisen-  
9 hower.

10 (2) Due to the rigid system of racial segrega-  
11 tion that prevailed in the United States during  
12 World War II, Black military pilots were trained at  
13 a separate airfield built near Tuskegee, Alabama.  
14 They became known as the "Tuskegee Airmen".

15 (3) The Tuskegee Airmen inspired revolu-  
16 tionary reform in the Armed Forces, paving the way  
17 for full racial integration in the Armed Forces. They  
18 overcame the enormous challenges of prejudice and  
19 discrimination, succeeding, despite obstacles that  
20 threatened failure.

21 (4) From all accounts, the training of the  
22 Tuskegee Airmen was an experiment established to  
23 prove that so-called "coloreds" were incapable of op-  
24 erating expensive and complex combat aircraft.  
25 Studies commissioned by the Army War College be-

1       tween 1924 and 1939 concluded that Blacks were  
2       unfit for leadership roles and incapable of aviation.  
3       Instead, the Tuskegee Airmen excelled.

4           (5) Overall, some 992 Black pilots graduated  
5       from the pilot training program of the Tuskegee  
6       Army Air Field, with the last class finishing in June  
7       1946, 450 of whom served in combat. The first class  
8       of cadets began in July 1941 with 13 airmen, all of  
9       whom had college degrees, some with Ph.D.'s, and  
10      all of whom had pilot's licenses. One of the grad-  
11      uates was Captain Benjamin O. Davis Jr., a United  
12      States Military Academy graduate. Four aviation ca-  
13      dets were commissioned as second lieutenants, and  
14      5 received Army Air Corps silver pilot wings.

15           (6) That the experiment achieved success rather  
16      than the expected failure is further evidenced by the  
17      eventual promotion of 3 of these pioneers through  
18      the commissioned officer ranks to flag rank, includ-  
19      ing the late General Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., United  
20      States Air Force, the late General Daniel "Chappie"  
21      James, United States Air Force, our Nation's first  
22      Black 4-star general, and Major General Lucius  
23      Theus, United States Air Force (retired).

24           (7) Four hundred fifty Black fighter pilots  
25      under the command of then Colonel Benjamin O.

1 Davis, Jr., fought in World War II aerial battles  
2 over North Africa, Sicily, and Europe, flying, in suc-  
3 cession, P-40, P-39, P-47, and P-51 aircraft.  
4 These gallant men flew 15,553 sorties and 1,578  
5 missions with the 12th Tactical Air Force and the  
6 15th Strategic Air Force.

7 (8) Colonel Davis later became the first Black  
8 flag officer of the United States Air Force, retired  
9 as a 3-star general, and was honored with a 4th star  
10 in retirement by President William J. Clinton.

11 (9) German pilots, who both feared and re-  
12 spected the Tuskegee Airmen, called them the  
13 “Schwartzze Vogelmenshen” (or “Black Birdmen”).  
14 White American bomber crews reverently referred to  
15 them as the “Black Redtail Angels”, because of the  
16 bright red painted on the tail assemblies of their  
17 fighter aircraft and because of their reputation for  
18 not losing bombers to enemy fighters as they pro-  
19 vided close escort for bombing missions over stra-  
20 tegic targets in Europe.

21 (10) The 99th Fighter Squadron, after having  
22 distinguished itself over North Africa, Sicily, and  
23 Italy, joined 3 other Black squadrons, the 100th, the  
24 301st, and the 302nd, designated as the 332nd  
25 Fighter Group. They then comprised the largest

1 fighter unit in the 15th Air Force. From Italian  
2 bases, they destroyed many enemy targets on the  
3 ground and at sea, including a German destroyer in  
4 strafing attacks, and they destroyed numerous  
5 enemy aircraft in the air and on the ground.

6 (11) Sixty-six of these pilots were killed in com-  
7 bat, while another 32 were either forced down or  
8 shot down and captured to become prisoners of war.  
9 These Black airmen came home with 150 Distin-  
10 guished Flying Crosses, Bronze Stars, Silver Stars,  
11 and Legions of Merit, one Presidential Unit Cita-  
12 tion, and the Red Star of Yugoslavia.

13 (12) Other Black pilots, navigators, bombard-  
14 iers and crewman who were trained for medium  
15 bombardment duty as the 477th Bomber Group  
16 (Medium) were joined by veterans of the 332nd  
17 Fighter Group to form the 477th Composite Group,  
18 flying the B-25 and P-47 aircraft. The demands of  
19 the members of the 477th Composite Group for par-  
20 ity in treatment and for recognition as competent  
21 military professionals, combined with the magnifi-  
22 cent wartime records of the 99th Fighter Squadron  
23 and the 332nd Fighter Group, led to a review of the  
24 racial policies of the Department of War.

1           (13) In September 1947, the United States Air  
2 Force, as a separate service, reactivated the 332d  
3 Fighter Group under the Tactical Air command.  
4 Members of the 332d Fighter Group were “Top  
5 Guns” in the 1st annual Air Force Gunnery Meet in  
6 1949.

7           (14) For every Black pilot there were 12 other  
8 civilian or military Black men and women per-  
9 forming ground support duties. Many of these men  
10 and women remained in the military service during  
11 the post-World War II era and spearheaded the inte-  
12 gration of the Armed Forces of the United States.

13           (15) Major achievements are attributed to  
14 many of those who returned to civilian life and  
15 earned leadership positions and respect as business-  
16 men, corporate executives, religious leaders, lawyers,  
17 doctors, educators, bankers, and political leaders.

18           (16) A period of nearly 30 years of anonymity  
19 for the Tuskegee Airmen was ended in 1972 with  
20 the founding of Tuskegee Airmen, Inc., in Detroit,  
21 Michigan. Organized as a non-military and nonprofit  
22 entity, Tuskegee Airmen, Inc., exists primarily to  
23 motivate and inspire young Americans to become  
24 participants in our Nation’s society and its demo-

1 cratic process, and to preserve the history of their  
2 legacy.

3 (17) The Tuskegee Airmen have several memo-  
4 rials in place to perpetuate the memory of who they  
5 were and what they accomplished, including—

6 (A) the Tuskegee Airmen, Inc., National  
7 Scholarship Fund for high school seniors who  
8 excel in mathematics, but need financial assist-  
9 ance to begin a college program;

10 (B) a museum in historic Fort Wayne in  
11 Detroit, Michigan;

12 (C) Memorial Park at the Air Force Mu-  
13 seum at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in  
14 Dayton, Ohio;

15 (D) a statue of a Tuskegee Airman in the  
16 Honor Park at the United States Air Force  
17 Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado; and

18 (E) a National Historic Site at Moton  
19 Field, where primary flight training was per-  
20 formed under contract with the Tuskegee Insti-  
21 tute.

22 **SEC. 2. 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 presentation, on behalf of the Congress, of a gold  
2 medal of appropriate design to the Tuskegee Airmen, col-  
3 lectively, in recognition of their unique military record,  
4 which inspired revolutionary reform in the Armed Forces.

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

11 **SEC. 3. DUPLICATE MEDALS.**

12 Under such regulations as the Secretary may pre-  
13 scribe, the Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in  
14 bronze of the gold medal struck under section 2, at a price  
15 sufficient to cover the costs of the medals, including labor,  
16 materials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses.

17 **SEC. 4. NATIONAL MEDALS.**

18 Medals struck pursuant to this Act are national med-  
19 als for purposes of chapter 51 of title 31, United States  
20 Code.

21 **SEC. 5. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS; PROCEEDS**  
22 **OF SALE.**

23 (a) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is  
24 authorized to be charged against the United States Mint  
25 Public Enterprise Fund, an amount not to exceed \$30,000

1 to pay for the cost of the medals authorized under section  
2 2.

3 (b) PROCEEDS OF SALE.—Amounts received from the  
4 sale of duplicate bronze medals under section 3 shall be  
5 deposited in the United States Mint Public Enterprise  
6 Fund.

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