

109TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 2872

To require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins in commemoration  
of Louis Braille.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 13, 2005

Mr. NEY (for himself and Mr. CARDIN) introduced the following bill; which  
was referred to the Committee on Financial Services

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## A BILL

To require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins  
in commemoration of Louis Braille.

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 “Louis Braille Bicenten-

5       nial—Braille Literacy Commemorative Coin Act”.

6       **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7       The Congress finds as follows:

8               (1) Louis Braille, who invented the Braille  
9       method for reading and writing by the blind that has  
10       allowed millions of blind people to be literate partici-

1 pants in their societies, was born in Coupvray, a  
2 small village near Paris, on January 4, 1809.

3 (2) Braille lost his sight at the age of three  
4 after injuring himself with an awl in the shop of his  
5 father Rene, a maker of harnesses and other objects  
6 of leather.

7 (3) A youth who was both intelligent and cre-  
8 ative and was blessed with dedicated parents, a  
9 thoughtful local priest and an energetic local school-  
10 teacher, Braille adapted to the situation and at-  
11 tended local school with other youths of his age, an  
12 unheard-of practice for a blind child of the period.

13 (4) At the age of 10, when his schooling other-  
14 wise would have stopped, Braille—with the aid of  
15 the priest and schoolteacher—was given a scholar-  
16 ship by a local nobleman and went to Paris to at-  
17 tend the Royal Institute for Blind Children where he  
18 became the youngest pupil.

19 (5) At the school, most instruction was oral but  
20 Braille found there were books for the blind—large,  
21 expensive-to-produce books in which the text was of  
22 large letters embossed upon the page.

23 (6) Soon Braille had read all 14 books in the  
24 school, but thirsted for more.

1           (7) A captain in Napoleon’s army, Charles  
2 Barbier de la Serre, had invented “night writing”, a  
3 method for communicating on the battlefield amidst  
4 the thick smoke of combat or at night without light-  
5 ing a match—which would aid enemy gunners—that  
6 used dots and dashes that were felt and interpreted  
7 with the fingers, and later adapted the method for  
8 use by the blind, calling it Sonography because it  
9 represented words by sounds, rather than spelling.

10           (8) Braille adopted the Sonography method in-  
11 stantly but soon recognized that the basis in sound  
12 and the large number of dots—as many as 12—  
13 used to represent words was too cumbersome.

14           (9) By the age of 15, and using a blunt awl,  
15 the same sort of tool that had blinded him, Braille  
16 had developed what is essentially modern Braille, a  
17 code that uses no more than 6 dots in a “cell” of  
18 2 columns of 3 dots each to represent each letter  
19 and contains a system of punctuation and of “con-  
20 tractions” to speed writing and reading.

21           (10) In contrast to the bulky books consisting  
22 of large embossed letters, Braille books can contain  
23 as many as 1000 characters or contractions on a  
24 standard 11-by-12-inch page of heavy paper, and to  
25 this day Braille can be punched with an awl-like

1 “stylus” into paper held in a metal “slate” that is  
2 very similar to the ones that Louis Braille adapted  
3 from Barbier’s original “night writing” devices.

4 (11) Also a talented organist who supported  
5 himself by giving concerts, Braille went on to de-  
6 velop the Braille representation of music and in  
7 1829 published the first-ever Braille book, a manual  
8 about how to read and write music.

9 (12) 8 years later, in 1837, Braille followed  
10 that publication with another book detailing a sys-  
11 tem of representation of mathematics.

12 (13) Braille’s talents were quickly recognized,  
13 and at 17 he was made the first blind apprentice  
14 teacher at the school, where he taught algebra,  
15 grammar, music, and geography.

16 (14) He and two blind classmates, his friends  
17 who probably were the first people to learn to read  
18 and write Braille, later became the first three blind  
19 full professors at the school.

20 (15) However, despite the fact that many blind  
21 people enthusiastically adopted the system of writing  
22 and reading, there was great skepticism among  
23 sighted people about the real usefulness of Braille’s  
24 code, and even at the Royal Institute, it was not  
25 taught until after his death on January 6, 1852.

1           (16) Braille did not start to spread widely until  
2           1868 when a group of British men—later to become  
3           known as the Royal National Institute for the  
4           Blind—began publicizing and teaching the system.

5           (17) Braille did not become the official and sole  
6           method of reading and writing for blind United  
7           States citizens until the 20th Century.

8           (18) Helen Keller, a Braille reader of another  
9           generation, said: “Braille has been a most precious  
10          aid to me in many ways. It made my going to college  
11          possible—it was the only method by which I could  
12          take notes on lectures. All my examination papers  
13          were copied for me in this system. I use Braille as  
14          a spider uses its web—to catch thoughts that flit  
15          across my mind for speeches, messages and manu-  
16          scripts.”.

17          (19) While rapid technological advances in the  
18          20th Century have greatly aided the blind in many  
19          ways by speeding access to information, each ad-  
20          vance has seen a commensurate drop in the teaching  
21          of Braille, to the point that only about 10 percent  
22          of blind students today are taught the system.

23          (20) However, for the blind not to know Braille  
24          is in itself a handicap, because literacy is the ability

1 to read and the ability to write and the ability to do  
2 the two interactively.

3 (21) The National Federation of the Blind, the  
4 Nation's oldest membership organization consisting  
5 of blind members, has been a champion of the  
6 Braille code, of Braille literacy for all blind people  
7 and of the memory of Louis Braille, and continues  
8 its Braille literacy efforts today through its divisions  
9 emphasizing Braille literacy, emphasizing education  
10 of blind children and emphasizing employment of the  
11 blind.

12 (22) Braille literacy aids the blind in taking re-  
13 sponsible and self-sufficient roles in society, such as  
14 employment: while 70 percent of the blind are unem-  
15 ployed, 85 percent of the employed blind are Braille-  
16 literate.

17 **SEC. 3. COIN SPECIFICATIONS.**

18 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of the Treasury  
19 (hereafter in this Act referred to as the “Secretary”) shall  
20 mint and issue not more than 400,000 \$1 coins bearing  
21 the designs specified in section 4(a), each of which shall—

22 (1) weigh 26.73 grams;

23 (2) have a diameter of 1.500 inches; and

24 (3) contain 90 percent silver and 10 percent  
25 copper.

1 (b) LEGAL TENDER.—The coins minted under this  
2 Act shall be legal tender, as provided in section 5103 of  
3 title 31, United States Code.

4 (c) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of section  
5 5134 of title 31, United States Code, all coins minted  
6 under this Act shall be considered to be numismatic items.

7 **SEC. 4. DESIGN OF COINS.**

8 (a) DESIGN REQUIREMENTS.—

9 (1) IN GENERAL.—The design of the coins  
10 minted under this Act shall be emblematic of the life  
11 and legacy of Louis Braille.

12 (2) OBVERSE.—The design on the obverse shall  
13 bear a representation of the image of Louis Braille.

14 (3) REVERSE.—The design on the reverse shall  
15 emphasize Braille literacy and shall specifically in-  
16 clude the word for Braille in Braille code (the  
17 Braille capital sign and the letters Brl) represented  
18 in a way that complies with section 3 of Specifica-  
19 tion 800 of the National Library Service for the  
20 Blind and Physically Handicapped of the Library of  
21 Congress specifications for Braille, and is tactilely  
22 indiscernible from printed or written Braille.

23 (4) DESIGNATION AND INSCRIPTIONS.—On  
24 each coin minted under this Act there shall be—

25 (A) a designation of the value of the coin;

1 (B) an inscription of the year “2009”; and

2 (C) inscriptions of the words “Liberty”,

3 “In God We Trust”, “United States of Amer-

4 ica”, and “E Pluribus Unum”.

5 (b) SELECTION.—The design for the coins minted  
6 under this Act shall be—

7 (1) selected by the Secretary after consultation  
8 with the Commission of Fine Arts and the National  
9 Federation of the Blind; and

10 (2) reviewed by the Citizens Coinage Advisory  
11 Committee.

12 **SEC. 5. ISSUANCE OF COINS.**

13 (a) QUALITY OF COINS.—Coins minted under this  
14 Act shall be issued in uncirculated and proof qualities.

15 (b) MINT FACILITY.—Only 1 facility of the United  
16 States Mint may be used to strike any particular quality  
17 of the coins minted under this Act.

18 (c) PERIOD FOR ISSUANCE.—The Secretary may  
19 issue coins minted under this Act only during the 1-year  
20 period beginning on January 1, 2009.

21 **SEC. 6. SALE OF COINS.**

22 (a) SALE PRICE.—The coins issued under this Act  
23 shall be sold by the Secretary at a price equal to the sum  
24 of—

25 (1) the face value of the coins;



1           (2) the surcharge provided in section 7(a) with  
2           respect to such coins; and

3           (3) the cost of designing and issuing the coins  
4           (including labor, materials, dies, use of machinery,  
5           overhead expenses, marketing, and shipping).

6           (b) BULK SALES.—The Secretary shall make bulk  
7           sales of the coins issued under this Act at a reasonable  
8           discount.

9           (c) PREPAID ORDERS.—

10           (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall accept  
11           prepaid orders for the coins minted under this Act  
12           before the issuance of such coins.

13           (2) DISCOUNT.—Sale prices with respect to pre-  
14           paid orders under paragraph (1) shall be at a rea-  
15           sonable discount.

16 **SEC. 7. SURCHARGES.**

17           (a) SURCHARGE REQUIRED.—All sales of coins under  
18           this Act shall include a surcharge of \$10 per coin.

19           (b) DISTRIBUTION.—Subject to section 5134(f) of  
20           title 31, United States Code, all surcharges which are re-  
21           ceived by the Secretary from the sale of coins issued under  
22           this Act shall be promptly paid by the Secretary to the  
23           the National Federation of the Blind to further its pro-  
24           grams to promote Braille literacy.

1           (c) AUDITS.—The National Federation of the Blind  
2 shall be subject to the audit requirements of section  
3 5134(f)(2) of title 31, United States Code, with regard  
4 to the amounts received by the National Federation under  
5 subsection (b).

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