

109TH CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

H. R. 2872

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 1, 2006

Received; read twice and referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and
Urban Affairs

AN ACT

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,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Louis Braille Bicenten-
3 nial—Braille Literacy Commemorative Coin Act”.

4 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

5 The Congress finds as follows:

6 (1) Louis Braille, who invented the Braille
7 method for reading and writing by the blind that has
8 allowed millions of blind people to be literate partici-
9 pants in their societies, was born in Coupvray, a
10 small village near Paris, on January 4, 1809.

11 (2) Braille lost his sight at the age of three
12 after injuring himself with an awl in the shop of his
13 father Rene, a maker of harnesses and other objects
14 of leather.

15 (3) A youth who was both intelligent and cre-
16 ative and was blessed with dedicated parents, a
17 thoughtful local priest and an energetic local school-
18 teacher, Braille adapted to the situation and at-
19 tended local school with other youths of his age, an
20 unheard-of practice for a blind child of the period.

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

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

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

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

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

20 (9) By the age of 15, and using a blunt awl,
21 the same sort of tool that had blinded him, Braille
22 had developed what is essentially modern Braille, a
23 code that uses no more than 6 dots in a “cell” of
24 2 columns of 3 dots each to represent each letter

1 and contains a system of punctuation and of “con-
2 tractions” to speed writing and reading.

3 (10) In contrast to the bulky books consisting
4 of large embossed letters, Braille books can contain
5 as many as 1000 characters or contractions on a
6 standard 11-by-12-inch page of heavy paper, and to
7 this day Braille can be punched with an awl-like
8 “stylus” into paper held in a metal “slate” that is
9 very similar to the ones that Louis Braille adapted
10 from Barbier’s original “night writing” devices.

11 (11) Also a talented organist who supported
12 himself by giving concerts, Braille went on to de-
13 velop the Braille representation of music and in
14 1829 published the first-ever Braille book, a manual
15 about how to read and write music.

16 (12) 8 years later, in 1837, Braille followed
17 that publication with another book detailing a sys-
18 tem of representation of mathematics.

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

23 (14) He and two blind classmates, his friends
24 who probably were the first people to learn to read

1 and write Braille, later became the first three blind
2 full professors at the school.

3 (15) However, despite the fact that many blind
4 people enthusiastically adopted the system of writing
5 and reading, there was great skepticism among
6 sighted people about the real usefulness of Braille's
7 code, and even at the Royal Institute, it was not
8 taught until after his death on January 6, 1852.

9 (16) Braille did not start to spread widely until
10 1868 when a group of British men—later to become
11 known as the Royal National Institute for the
12 Blind—began publicizing and teaching the system.

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

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

1 (19) While rapid technological advances in the
2 20th Century have greatly aided the blind in many
3 ways by speeding access to information, each ad-
4 vance has seen a commensurate drop in the teaching
5 of Braille, to the point that only about 10 percent
6 of blind students today are taught the system.

7 (20) However, for the blind not to know Braille
8 is in itself a handicap, because literacy is the ability
9 to read and the ability to write and the ability to do
10 the two interactively.

11 (21) The National Federation of the Blind, the
12 Nation's oldest membership organization consisting
13 of blind members, has been a champion of the
14 Braille code, of Braille literacy for all blind people
15 and of the memory of Louis Braille, and continues
16 its Braille literacy efforts today through its divisions
17 emphasizing Braille literacy, emphasizing education
18 of blind children and emphasizing employment of the
19 blind.

20 (22) Braille literacy aids the blind in taking re-
21 sponsible and self-sufficient roles in society, such as
22 employment: while 70 percent of the blind are unem-
23 ployed, 85 percent of the employed blind are Braille-
24 literate.

1 **SEC. 3. COIN SPECIFICATIONS.**

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

- 6 (1) weigh 26.73 grams;
7 (2) have a diameter of 1.500 inches; and
8 (3) contain 90 percent silver and 10 percent
9 copper.

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

13 (c) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of section
14 5134 of title 31, United States Code, all coins minted
15 under this Act shall be considered to be numismatic items.

16 **SEC. 4. DESIGN OF COINS.**

17 (a) DESIGN REQUIREMENTS.—

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

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

23 (3) REVERSE.—The design on the reverse shall
24 emphasize Braille literacy and shall specifically in-
25 clude the word for Braille in Braille code (the
26 Braille capital sign and the letters Brl) represented

1 in a way that substantially complies with section 3
2 of Specification 800 of the National Library Service
3 for the Blind and Physically Handicapped of the Li-
4 brary of Congress specifications for Braille, and is
5 tactilely indiscernible from printed or written
6 Braille.

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

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

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

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

12 “In God We Trust”, “United States of Amer-
13 ica”, and “E Pluribus Unum”.

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

16 (1) selected by the Secretary after consultation
17 with the Commission of Fine Arts and the National
18 Federation of the Blind; and

19 (2) reviewed by the Citizens Coinage Advisory
20 Committee.

21 **SEC. 5. ISSUANCE OF COINS.**

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

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

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

7 **SEC. 6. SALE OF COINS.**

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

11 (1) the face value of the coins;

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

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

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

20 (c) PREPAID ORDERS.—

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

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

4 **SEC. 7. SURCHARGES.**

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

7 (b) DISTRIBUTION.—Subject to section 5134(f) of
8 title 31, United States Code, all surcharges which are re-
9 ceived by the Secretary from the sale of coins issued under
10 this Act shall be promptly paid by the Secretary to the
11 National Federation of the Blind to further its programs
12 to promote Braille literacy.

13 (c) AUDITS.—The National Federation of the Blind
14 shall be subject to the audit requirements of section
15 5134(f)(2) of title 31, United States Code, with regard
16 to the amounts received by the National Federation under
17 subsection (b).

18 (d) LIMITATION.—Notwithstanding subsection (a),
19 no surcharge may be included with respect to the issuance
20 under this Act of any coin during a calendar year if, as
21 of the time of such issuance, the issuance of such coin
22 would result in the number of commemorative coin pro-
23 grams issued during such year to exceed the annual 2
24 commemorative coin program issuance limitation under
25 section 5112(m)(1) of title 31, United States Code (as in

1 effect on the date of the enactment of this Act). The Sec-
2 retary of the Treasury may issue guidance to carry out
3 this subsection.

Passed the House of Representatives February 28,
2006.

Attest:

KAREN L. HAAS,

Clerk.