

110TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 974

To authorize and request the President to award the Medal of Honor to Joseph T. Getherall, of Hacienda Heights, California, for acts of valor in the Republic of Vietnam on December 22, 1966, while serving in the Marine Corps during the Vietnam War.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 8, 2007

Mrs. NAPOLITANO introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Armed Services

A BILL

To authorize and request the President to award the Medal of Honor to Joseph T. Getherall, of Hacienda Heights, California, for acts of valor in the Republic of Vietnam on December 22, 1966, while serving in the Marine Corps during the Vietnam War.

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. AUTHORIZATION AND REQUEST FOR AWARD**
2 **OF MEDAL OF HONOR TO JOSEPH T.**
3 **GETHERALL, OF HACIENDA HEIGHTS, CALI-**
4 **FORNIA, FOR ACTS OF VALOR DURING THE**
5 **VIETNAM WAR.**

6 (a) **AUTHORIZATION.**—The President is authorized
7 and requested to award the Medal of Honor under section
8 6241 of title 10, United States Code, to Joseph T.
9 Getherall, of Hacienda Heights, California, for the acts
10 of valor during the Vietnam War described in subsection
11 (b).

12 (b) **ACTION DESCRIBED.**—The acts of valor referred
13 to in subsection (a) are the actions of Joseph T. Getherall
14 in the Republic of Vietnam on December 22, 1966, while
15 serving as a squad leader in Company M of the Third Bat-
16 talion, Twenty-Sixth Marines, Third Marine Division, dur-
17 ing “Operation Chinook”. Company M was occupying a
18 night defensive position in the area of the Co Bi-Tham Tan
19 Corridor, Thua Thien Province, when the Marines came
20 under intense small arms and mortar fire from the 802nd
21 Viet Cong Battalion. Unhesitatingly exposing himself to
22 intense small arms, automatic weapons, and mortar fire,
23 Sergeant Getherall repeatedly moved across open terrain
24 to effectively direct his squad. Sergeant Getherall was seri-
25 ously wounded in both legs and arms by an exploding mor-
26 tar round. Despite his painful injuries, Sergeant Getherall

1 refused medical evacuation and continued to pinpoint
2 enemy targets, direct fire, resupply his men with ammuni-
3 tion, and ensure the integrity of the perimeter defense,
4 which spread across fifty meters of open terrain. With
5 most of the enemy ground assaults throughout the night
6 concentrated in front of his squad's position, Sergeant
7 Getherall continually exposed himself to enemy fire. He
8 personally killed several of the enemy attackers with his
9 own rifle fire. During one of the enemy assaults, a Marine
10 was wounded in the open, and Sergeant Getherall fear-
11 lessly moved across the hazardous open terrain under in-
12 tense enemy fire and moved the Marine to cover. During
13 another assault, Sergeant Getherall observed a Viet Cong
14 about to throw a grenade and killed him with rifle fire,
15 but not before the enemy soldier threw the grenade, which
16 landed among Sergeant Getherall's squad. Sergeant
17 Getherall shouted a warning to his men and with complete
18 disregard for his own life and under heavy enemy fire, he
19 was able to get to the grenade and jump on it. He then
20 picked it up and threw it back at the enemy where it ex-
21 ploded a few meters away, wounding Sergeant Getherall
22 for a second time in one of his legs. By his prompt and
23 courageous action in the face of almost certain death, he
24 saved several of his squad members from death or serious
25 injury. During the remainder of the night, he moved

1 among his men, encouraging them and ensuring that there
2 was maximum security and firepower to repulse subse-
3 quent attacks. Inspired by his selfless courage and aggres-
4 sive fighting spirit, his squad members repulsed a number
5 of savage attacks, while inflicting heavy casualties on a
6 determined and numerically superior enemy force. By his
7 outstanding leadership, resolute determination, and
8 unfaltering devotion to duty in the face of grave personal
9 danger, Sergeant Getherall upheld the highest traditions
10 of the Marine Corps. Six of Sergeant Getherall's squad
11 members and his commanding officer have submitted
12 sworn affidavits attesting to his heroic actions. The Pla-
13 toon Commander at the time, Gary Loveridge, rec-
14 ommended Sergeant Getherall for a Silver Star, but his
15 recommendation was lost by the Marine Corps. In a letter
16 dated April 14, 2004, Mr. Loveridge wrote that his origi-
17 nal Silver Star recommendation be upgraded to a Navy
18 Cross. This letter was written before Mr. Loveridge was
19 made aware of the fact that Sergeant Getherall jumped
20 on an enemy grenade. In June 2004 at a reunion, two
21 of Sergeant Getherall's former squad members told Mr.
22 Loveridge for the first time about the action of Sergeant
23 Getherall in jumping on the enemy grenade to save their
24 lives during the battle. This updated information caused

1 Mr. Loveridge to rewrite his Summary of Action and Cita-
2 tion to include this additional action.

3 (c) WAIVER OF TIME LIMITATIONS.—The award
4 under subsection (a) may be made without regard to the
5 time limitations specified in section 6248 of title 10,
6 United States Code, or any other time limitation with re-
7 spect to the awarding of certain medals to persons who
8 served in the Navy or Marine Corps.

○