To award a Congressional Gold Medal to Myrlie Evers-Williams, in recognition of the great contributions and ultimate sacrifice she and her husband, the assassinated civil rights leader Medgar Wiley Evers, made in the fight for racial equality in the United States.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 25, 2017

Mr. HARPER introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Financial Services

A BILL

To award a Congressional Gold Medal to Myrlie Evers-Williams, in recognition of the great contributions and ultimate sacrifice she and her husband, the assassinated civil rights leader Medgar Wiley Evers, made in the fight for racial equality in the United States.

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 “Civil Rights Legacy
5 of Medgar Wiley Evers Congressional Gold Medal Act”.
6 SEC. 2. FINDINGS.
7 The Congress finds the following:
(1) An integral part of the fight for racial equality, Medgar Wiley Evers, was born July 2, 1925, in Decatur, Mississippi, to James and Jessie Evers.

(2) Faithfully serving his country, Medgar Evers willingly left high school to join the Army at the start of World War II.

(3) After the conclusion of the war, Mr. Evers returned home to Mississippi, completed high school, enrolled in Alcorn Agricultural and Mechanical College (presently known as Alcorn State University) and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Business Administration.

(4) While at Alcorn State University, Medgar Evers met and married fellow Alcorn student, Myrlie Beasley, of Vicksburg, Mississippi.

(5) Upon graduation, Myrlie and Medgar Evers moved to Mound Bayou, Mississippi, where Medgar held a job with Magnolia Mutual Life Insurance Company, and began establishing local chapters of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (“NAACP”) throughout the Mississippi Delta.

(6) Having been so moved by the immense suffering of African-Americans in Mississippi, Medgar
Evers felt compelled to fight to change the circumstances and challenges facing them and, in 1954, Medgar Evers became the first known African-American to apply to the University of Mississippi School of Law. Mr. Evers was denied enrollment.

(7) In 1954, Medgar Evers became the first Field Secretary for the Mississippi chapter of the NAACP.

(8) In the capacities of his new position, Medgar Evers hosted numerous voter registration efforts in Mississippi and, as a result of these activities, received numerous threats against his life.

(9) Despite these threats, Mr. Evers carried on his work with dedication and courage, organizing rallies, building membership within the NAACP, and traveling around the country educating the public on the fight for Civil Rights.

(10) Medgar and Myrlie Evers’ passion for quality education for all children led them to file suit against the Jackson, Mississippi, public school system gaining him attention with the national media as a leader of the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi.
(11) As a result of his continued and ongoing efforts—rallies, sit-ins, and protests—to stand up for the rights of African-Americans in Mississippi, Mr. Evers was arrested, beaten, and jailed with his due process rights denied.

(12) The senseless and abhorrent violence against Mr. Evers reached its pinnacle on June 12, 1963, when he was violently shot in front of his home and died shortly afterwards in a local hospital, mere hours after President John F. Kennedy had made a national televised speech from the Oval Office calling for full racial integration in America. The Civil Rights Act was enacted the following year.

(13) As a veteran, Evers was buried with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery.

(14) On June 23, 1963, Byron De La Beckwith, a member of the White Citizens’ Council, was arrested for Evers’ murder, but juries in 1964, composed solely of White men, twice deadlocked on De La Beckwith’s guilt, resulting in mistrials.

(15) Following two trials resulting in acquittal, in 1990, Mrs. Evers convinced Mississippi prosecutors to reopen Medgar Evers’ murder case, and a new trial led to the conviction and life imprisonment of Medgar Evers’ killer in 1994.
(16) It is befitting that Congress bestow the highest civilian honor, the Congressional Gold Medal, to Myrlie in recognition of the great contributions and ultimate sacrifice she and her husband, the assassinated civil rights leader Medgar Wiley Evers, made in the fight for racial equality, which tragically led to his assassination, but also was a major catalyst in passage and enactment of the Civil Rights Act in 1964.

SEC. 3. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.

(a) PRESENTATION AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President pro tempore of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements for the presentation, on behalf of the Congress, of a gold medal of appropriate design to Myrlie Evers-Williams, in recognition of the great contributions and ultimate sacrifice she and her husband, the assassinated civil rights leader Medgar Wiley Evers, made in the fight for racial equality in the United States.

(b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For purposes of the presentation referred to in subsection (a), the Secretary of the Treasury (referred to in this Act as the “Secretary”) shall strike a gold medal with suitable emblems, devices, and inscriptions, to be determined by the Secretary.
(c) AWARD OF MEDAL.—Following the award of the gold medal under subsection (a), the medal shall be given to the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum, where it shall be available for display or temporary loan to be displayed elsewhere, as appropriate.

SEC. 4. DUPLICATE MEDALS.

The Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in bronze of the gold medal struck pursuant to section 3 under such regulations as the Secretary may prescribe, at a price sufficient to cover the cost thereof, including labor, materials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses, and the cost of the gold medal.

SEC. 5. STATUS OF MEDAL.

(a) NATIONAL MEDAL.—The gold medal struck pursuant to this Act is a national medal for purposes of chapter 51 of title 31, United States Code.

(b) NUMISMATIC ITEM.—For purposes of section 5134 of title 31, United States Code, the gold medal struck under this Act shall be considered to be a numismatic item.