

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 2101

To award a Congressional Gold Medal, collectively, to the crew of the USS Indianapolis, in recognition of their perseverance, bravery, and service to the United States.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

NOVEMBER 8, 2017

Mr. DONNELLY (for himself and Mr. YOUNG) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs

A BILL

To award a Congressional Gold Medal, collectively, to the crew of the USS Indianapolis, in recognition of their perseverance, bravery, and service to 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 “USS Indianapolis Con-
5 gressional Gold Medal Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

8 (1) The Portland-class heavy cruiser USS Indi-
9 anapolis received 10 battle stars between February

1 1942 and April 1945 while participating in major
2 battles of World War II from the Aleutian Islands
3 to Okinawa.

4 (2) The USS Indianapolis was commanded by
5 Captain Charles Butler McVay III and 1,196 other
6 crew members when it set sail for the Island of
7 Tinian on July 16, 1945, to deliver components of
8 the atomic bomb “Little Boy”. The USS Indianap-
9 olis set a speed record during the portion of the trip
10 from California to Pearl Harbor and successfully de-
11 livered the cargo on July 26, 1945. The USS Indi-
12 anapolis then traveled to Guam and received further
13 orders to join Task Group 95.7 in the Leyte Gulf in
14 the Philippines for training. During the length of
15 the trip, the USS Indianapolis went unescorted.

16 (3) On July 30, 1945, minutes after midnight,
17 the USS Indianapolis was hit by 2 torpedoes fired
18 by the I-58, a Japanese submarine. The resulting
19 explosion severed off the bow of the ship, sinking the
20 ship in about 12 minutes. Of 1,196 crew members,
21 about 900 made it into the water. While a few life
22 rafts were deployed, most men were stranded in the
23 water with only a kapok life jacket.

24 (4) Shortly after 11 a.m. on August 2, 1945, 4
25 days after the sinking of the USS Indianapolis,

1 Lieutenant Wilbur Gwinn was piloting a PV-1 Ven-
2 tura bomber and accidentally noticed men in the
3 water who were later determined to be survivors of
4 the sinking of the USS Indianapolis. Lieutenant
5 Gwinn alerted a PBY aircraft, under the command
6 of Lieutenant Adrian Marks, about the disaster.
7 Lieutenant Marks made a dangerous open-sea land-
8 ing to begin rescuing the men before any surface
9 vessels arrived. The USS Cecil J. Doyle was the first
10 surface ship to arrive on the scene and took consid-
11 erable risk in using a searchlight as a beacon, which
12 gave hope to survivors in the water and encouraged
13 them to make it through another night. The rescue
14 mission continued well into August 3, 1945, and was
15 well-coordinated and responsive once launched. The
16 individuals who participated in the rescue mission
17 conducted a thorough search, saved lives, and under-
18 took the difficult job of identifying the remains of,
19 and providing a proper burial for, those individuals
20 who had died.

21 (5) Only 317 men survived the ordeal and the
22 survivors had to deal with severe burns, exposure to
23 the elements, extreme dehydration, and shark at-
24 tacks.

1 (6) During World War II, the USS Indianapolis
2 frequently served as the flagship for the commander
3 of the Fifth Fleet, Admiral Raymond Spruance, sur-
4 vived a bomb released during a kamikaze attack
5 (which badly damaged the ship and killed 9 mem-
6 bers of the crew), earned a total of 10 battle stars,
7 and accomplished a top secret mission that was crit-
8 ical to ending the war. The sacrifice, perseverance,
9 and bravery of the crew of the USS Indianapolis
10 should never be forgotten.

11 **SEC. 3. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

12 (a) AWARD AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of the
13 House of Representatives and the President pro tempore
14 of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements for the
15 award, on behalf of Congress, of a single gold medal of
16 appropriate design to the crew of the USS Indianapolis,
17 in recognition of their perseverance, bravery, and service
18 to the United States.

19 (b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For the purposes of the
20 award referred to in subsection (a), the Secretary of the
21 Treasury (referred to in this Act as the “Secretary”) shall
22 strike the gold medal with suitable emblems, devices, and
23 inscriptions, to be determined by the Secretary.

24 (c) INDIANA WAR MEMORIAL MUSEUM.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—Following the award of the
 2 gold medal referred to in subsection (a), the gold
 3 medal shall be given to the Indiana War Memorial
 4 Museum in Indianapolis, Indiana, where it will be
 5 displayed as appropriate and made available for re-
 6 search.

7 (2) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of
 8 Congress that the Indiana War Memorial Museum
 9 should make the gold medal received under this Act
 10 available for display elsewhere, particularly at other
 11 locations and events associated with the USS Indi-
 12 anapolis.

13 **SEC. 4. DUPLICATE MEDALS.**

14 Under such regulations as the Secretary may pre-
 15 scribe, the Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in
 16 bronze of the gold medal struck under section 3, at a price
 17 sufficient to cover the costs of the medals, including labor,
 18 materials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses.

19 **SEC. 5. STATUS OF MEDALS.**

20 (a) NATIONAL MEDALS.—Medals struck under this
 21 Act are national medals for purposes of chapter 51 of title
 22 31, United States Code.

23 (b) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of sections
 24 5134 and 5136 of title 31, United States Code, all medals

- 1 struck under this Act shall be considered to be numismatic
- 2 items.

