

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 5340

To award posthumously a Congressional Gold Medal to Hazel M. Johnson, in recognition of her achievements and contributions to the environmental justice movement.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

DECEMBER 6, 2019

Mr. RUSH introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Financial Services, and in addition to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To award posthumously a Congressional Gold Medal to Hazel M. Johnson, in recognition of her achievements and contributions to the environmental justice movement.

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 “Hazel M. Johnson
5 Congressional Gold Medal Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 The Congress finds the following:

1 (1) Hazel Johnson fought for environmental
2 justice in Chicago beginning in the 1970s and con-
3 tinuing through the rest of her life.

4 (2) When Johnson discovered that the South
5 Side of Chicago had the highest cancer rate of any
6 area in Chicago, she was inspired to investigate the
7 cancer rates, foul odors, and number of children
8 with respiratory illnesses in her own neighborhood,
9 the community of Altgeld Gardens on the South
10 Side of Chicago.

11 (3) She discovered her community, Altgeld Gar-
12 dens, which is a public housing project, was built on
13 a landfill surrounded by toxicity, which polluted the
14 air, water, and land.

15 (4) Additionally, the Altgeld Gardens homes
16 had asbestos and elevated lead levels.

17 (5) This discovery inspired Johnson to create
18 the People for Community Recovery, an organization
19 which fights for a safer environment.

20 (6) Johnson and the People for Community Re-
21 covery fought to educate and empower the residents
22 of Altgeld Gardens, including providing workshops
23 and trainings, conducting health surveys, rallying
24 residents to protest contamination, and working with
25 youth in the community.

1 (7) The People for Community Recovery put
2 pressure on the Chicago Housing Authority to re-
3 move asbestos from Altgeld Gardens.

4 (8) Johnson's fight for clean water led to the
5 installation of water and sewer lines by city health
6 officials in the far South Side neighborhood of Mary-
7 land Manor, where the existing well water was con-
8 taminated with cyanide and other toxins.

9 (9) Johnson used her vigilance and activism to
10 give low-income minority communities a voice and a
11 stake in the environmental justice fight by bringing
12 the conversation to personal, immediate, and urgent
13 concerns which directly impact communities inhab-
14 ited by people of color.

15 (10) Johnson also strove to hold both busi-
16 nesses and the government responsible for how their
17 actions impact the environment.

18 (11) Johnson was given the 1992 President's
19 Environment and Conservation Challenge Award in
20 recognition of her environmental justice work.

21 (12) Notably, Johnson was instrumental in
22 pressuring President Bill Clinton to sign the Envi-
23 ronmental Justice Executive Order, which holds the
24 Federal Government accountable for urban commu-
25 nities exposed to pollution.

1 (13) In 2004, sociologist David Naguib Pellow
2 credited Johnson and the People for Community Re-
3 covery with putting “the South Side of Chicago on
4 the radar screen for activists and policy makers
5 around the United States who are concerned about
6 environmental racism”.

7 (14) On January 12, 2011, the Illinois General
8 Assembly, by way of a House Joint Resolution, des-
9 ignated “the portion of 130th Street from the
10 Bishop Ford Freeway to State Street in Chicago as
11 the ‘Hazel Johnson EJ Way’ ”.

12 (15) Johnson was a visionary, who was able to
13 foresee the impacts of failing to address environ-
14 mental and social justice conditions.

15 (16) Johnson’s work earned her the title of
16 “mother of the environmental justice movement”.

17 **SEC. 3. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

18 (a) PRESENTATION AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of
19 the House of Representatives and the President pro tem-
20 pore of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements
21 for the posthumous presentation, on behalf of the Con-
22 gress, of a gold medal of appropriate design in commemo-
23 ration to Hazel M. Johnson, in recognition of her achieve-
24 ments and contributions to the environmental justice
25 movement.

1 (b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For purposes of the
2 presentation referred to in subsection (a), the Secretary
3 of the Treasury (referred to in this Act as the “Sec-
4 retary”) shall strike a gold medal with suitable emblems,
5 devices, and inscriptions, to be determined by the Sec-
6 retary.

7 (c) NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HIS-
8 TORY AND CULTURE.—

9 (1) IN GENERAL.—Following the award of the
10 gold medal under subsection (a), the gold medal
11 shall be given to the National Museum of African
12 American History and Culture of the Smithsonian
13 Institution, where it shall be available for display as
14 appropriate and made available for research.

15 (2) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of
16 Congress that the gold medal received under para-
17 graph (1) should be made available for display else-
18 where, particularly at other appropriate locations as-
19 sociated with Hazel M. Johnson.

20 **SEC. 4. DUPLICATE MEDALS.**

21 The Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in
22 bronze of the gold medal struck pursuant to section 3
23 under such regulations as the Secretary may prescribe, at
24 a price sufficient to cover the cost thereof, including labor,

1 materials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses,
2 and the cost of the gold medal.

3 **SEC. 5. STATUS OF MEDALS.**

4 (a) NATIONAL MEDALS.—The medals struck pursu-
5 ant to this Act are national medals for purposes of chapter
6 51 of title 31, United States Code.

7 (b) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of section
8 5134 of title 31, United States Code, all medals struck
9 under this Act shall be considered to be numismatic items.

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