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1ST SESSION

S. 642

To award a Congressional Gold Medal to Master Sergeant Rodrick “Roddie” Edmonds in recognition of his heroic actions during World War II.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 4, 2019

Mr. ALEXANDER (for himself and Mrs. BLACKBURN) 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 to Master Sergeant Rodrick “Roddie” Edmonds in recognition of his heroic actions during World War II.

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 “Master Sergeant
5 Roddie Edmonds Congressional Gold Medal Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

8 (1) Rodrick W. Edmonds (in this Act referred
9 to as “Roddie Edmonds” or “Edmonds”) was born

1 in 1919 in South Knoxville, Tennessee, and grad-
2 uated from Knoxville High School in 1938.

3 (2) Roddie Edmonds was a Master Sergeant in
4 the United States Army and a member of the 422nd
5 Infantry Regiment while serving during World War
6 II.

7 (3) Roddie Edmonds landed in Europe in 1944
8 and fought to the border between Belgium and Ger-
9 many. In December of 1944, while fighting in the
10 Battle of the Bulge, Edmonds was captured by Nazi
11 forces and detained in Stalag IX-A, a prisoner of
12 war camp in Ziegenhain, Germany.

13 (4) Stalag IX-A was a site used to identify,
14 segregate, and remove Jewish soldiers from the gen-
15 eral population of prisoners of war and many of the
16 Jewish soldiers who were so removed were sent to
17 labor camps or murdered. Members of the Armed
18 Forces were warned of this policy and aware that
19 their fellow servicemen could be at risk.

20 (5) As the senior noncommissioned officer in
21 Stalag IX-A, Master Sergeant Edmonds was re-
22 sponsible for 1,275 members of the Armed Forces at
23 the camp. Approximately 1 month after the date on
24 which Edmonds was detained, Edmonds was di-
25 rected to order the Jewish-American soldiers under

1 his command to fall out in order to separate the
2 Jewish-American soldiers from their fellow prisoners.

3 (6) Disregarding the orders of the Nazis,
4 Roddie Edmonds commanded all of his men to fall
5 out and, the following morning, all of the 1,275
6 members of the Armed Forces under the command
7 of Edmonds stood outside of their prison barracks.

8 (7) Upon seeing the soldiers, a German officer
9 angrily shouted, “They cannot all be Jews!”, to
10 which Edmonds replied, “We are all Jews here”.

11 (8) The German officer took out his pistol and
12 pointed the gun at the head of Edmonds, but Ed-
13 monds refused to identify the Jewish soldiers. In-
14 stead, Edmonds responded, “According to the Gene-
15 va Convention, we only have to give our name, rank,
16 and serial number. If you shoot me, you will have
17 to shoot all of us and, after the war, you will be
18 tried for war crimes”.

19 (9) The German officer turned away from Ed-
20 monds and the other soldiers and left the scene. The
21 actions taken by Edmonds saved the lives of ap-
22 proximately 200 Jewish-American members of the
23 Armed Forces.

24 (10) Lester Tanner, a Jewish-American mem-
25 ber of the Armed Forces also captured during the

1 Battle of the Bulge, witnessed the incident and stat-
2 ed that, “There was no question in my mind, or that
3 of Master Sergeant Edmonds, that the Germans
4 were removing the Jewish prisoners from the general
5 population at great risk to their survival. The U.S.
6 Army’s standing command to its ranking officers in
7 POW camps is that you resist the enemy and care
8 for the safety of your men to the greatest extent
9 possible. Master Sergeant Edmonds, at the risk of
10 his immediate death, defied the Germans with the
11 unexpected consequences that the Jewish prisoners
12 were saved”.

13 (11) Edmonds survived 100 days in captivity
14 and returned home after the war. Later, Edmonds
15 served the United States in Korea as a member of
16 the National Guard. Edmonds died in 1985, but
17 never told his family or anyone else of his brave ac-
18 tions outside the barracks of Stalag IX–A during
19 World War II.

20 (12) Edmonds was posthumously recognized by
21 Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance
22 Center in Jerusalem, as “Righteous Among the Na-
23 tions”, the first member of the Armed Forces and
24 1 of only 5 people of the United States to be so rec-
25 ognized. Avner Shalev, Chairman of Yad Vashem,

1 announced the selection of Edmonds by saying,
2 “Master Sergeant Roddie Edmonds seemed like an
3 ordinary American soldier, but he had an extraor-
4 dinary sense of responsibility and dedication to his
5 fellow human beings. . . . The choices and actions
6 of Master Sergeant Edmonds set an example for his
7 fellow American soldiers as they stood united against
8 the barbaric evil of the Nazis”.

9 **SEC. 3. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

10 (a) AWARD AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of the
11 House of Representatives and the President pro tempore
12 of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements for the
13 posthumous award, on behalf of Congress, of a gold medal
14 of appropriate design to Roddie Edmonds in recognition
15 of his achievements and heroic actions during World War
16 II.

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

22 (c) PRESENTATION AND AWARD OF MEDAL.—The
23 gold medal referred to in subsection (a) shall be presented,
24 and following the presentation awarded, to the next of kin
25 of Roddie Edmonds.

1 **SEC. 4. DUPLICATE MEDALS.**

2 The Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in
3 bronze of the gold medal struck under section 3 under
4 such regulations as the Secretary may prescribe, at a price
5 sufficient to cover the cost thereof, including labor, mate-
6 rials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses, and
7 the cost of the gold medal.

8 **SEC. 5. STATUS OF MEDALS.**

9 (a) NATIONAL MEDALS.—The medals struck under
10 this Act are national medals for purposes of chapter 51
11 of title 31, United States Code.

12 (b) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of sections
13 5134 and 5136 of title 31, United States Code, all medals
14 struck under this Act shall be considered to be numismatic
15 items.

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