

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 10110

To award a Congressional Gold Medal to the 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion, collectively, in recognition of their extraordinary heroism and life-saving actions during the D-Day invasion, and their significant contributions to the success of the Allied forces during World War II.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NOVEMBER 8, 2024

Mr. VEASEY (for himself, Mr. KELLY of Mississippi, Mr. KUSTOFF, Mr. CARSON, Mr. GARAMENDI, Mr. GUEST, Mr. JACKSON of Illinois, Mr. CRAWFORD, Mr. DUNCAN, Mr. WILSON of South Carolina, Mr. KHANNA, Mrs. BICE, Mr. BACON, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. CUELLAR, Mr. MOYLAN, Mr. DAVIS of North Carolina, Mr. VAN DREW, Mr. CARTER of Louisiana, Mr. SMUCKER, Ms. GARCIA of Texas, and Ms. STRICKLAND) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Financial Services, and in addition to the Committee on House Administration, 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 a Congressional Gold Medal to the 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion, collectively, in recognition of their extraordinary heroism and life-saving actions during the D-Day invasion, and their significant contributions to the success of the Allied forces 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,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “320th Barrage Balloon
3 Battalion Gold Medal Act”.

4 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

5 Congress finds the following:

6 (1) The 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion was
7 activated on December 10, 1942, and their first
8 combat assignment took place on the beaches of
9 Utah and Omaha in Normandy, France, during the
10 D-Day invasion.

11 (2) The Soldiers of the Battalion played a cru-
12 cial role in protecting the Allied forces during the D-
13 Day invasion by deploying barrage balloons to pre-
14 vent enemy aircraft from targeting the invasion
15 forces directly. Their bravery and determination ex-
16 emplify the valor and dedication of African-American
17 soldiers during World War II.

18 (3) The 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion was
19 unique at Normandy for two reasons. First, it was
20 the only American barrage balloon unit in France
21 and second, it was the only African-American com-
22 bat unit to land in Normandy.

23 (4) The brave men of the 320th Barrage Bal-
24 loon Battalion faced intense enemy fire during the
25 D-Day invasion. Their mission was to raise flam-
26 mable hydrogen-filled barrage balloons to protect as-

1 saunting infantry and armor from being strafed by
2 enemy aircraft. The balloons, armed with small
3 bombs, flew at an altitude of up to 2,000 feet to de-
4 fend soldiers landing on the beaches against strafing
5 attacks by German aircraft.

6 (5) The 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion came
7 up with an ingenious solution to one problem they
8 had during the landing. They refitted RL-31 Signal
9 Corps field cable winches with barrage balloon reels,
10 which weighed only 35 pounds and were mounted in
11 the back of a jeep to deploy and control balloons on
12 D-Day.

13 (6) Despite the severe conditions and many bal-
14 loons being shot down, the battalion successfully de-
15 ployed their balloons which were credited with pro-
16 tecting incoming Allied ships, troops, and crucial
17 material from attack. The battalion was credited
18 with downing at least one, if not several, German
19 Ju-88 aircraft, significantly contributing to the
20 overall security and success of the invasion and the
21 Allied victory.

22 (7) Additionally, at approximately 10:15 A.M.
23 on June 6, 1944, five battalion medics with the
24 320th were the first to land on Omaha Beach, with
25 crews of three-to-four men joining them shortly

1 after. U.S. Army Corporal Waverly B. Woodson Jr.
2 was among them.

3 (8) Cpl Woodson was injured when his Landing
4 Craft, Tank (LCT 856) hit a sea mine and was,
5 then, struck by an artillery shell. Despite his inju-
6 ries, Woodson continued to perform his duties, con-
7 ducting an amputation, setting limbs and removing
8 bullets over a 30-hour period. He even revived three
9 men via artificial respiration. His efforts on D-Day
10 are believed to have treated more than 200 wounded
11 soldiers and saved countless lives. On September 24,
12 2024, Cpl Woodson was posthumously awarded the
13 Distinguished Service Cross—the highest award the
14 Army can bestow on its own authority—in recogni-
15 tion of his valor and heroism. He was recommended
16 for the Medal of Honor by Gen. John C.H. Lee, but
17 never received it.

18 (9) The 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion
19 served 140 days in France, providing vital air de-
20 fense during the critical early stages of the invasion.
21 In late July 1944, Battery A of the 320th moved
22 from Omaha Beach to the port city of Cherbourg,
23 while the remaining batteries stayed on Omaha and
24 Utah Beaches until early October, when deterio-
25 rating weather prevented ships from landing.

1 (10) Following their service in the European
2 Theater, the 320th underwent training at Camp
3 Stewart, Georgia prior to their deployment to the
4 Pacific. On May 6, 1945, the 320th arrived in Oahu,
5 Hawaii, in support of the proposed Allied invasion of
6 Japan which never took place.

7 (11) A commendation by Supreme Allied Com-
8 mander General Dwight D. Eisenhower cited the
9 unit for conducting its mission with courage and de-
10 termination, proving to be an important element of
11 the air defense team. Despite their significant con-
12 tributions, the 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion has
13 not received the recognition it deserves in the annals
14 of World War II history.

15 (12) Albert Grillette Wood Jr., the last sur-
16 viving member of this unit, died on June 2, 2024.
17 His passing marked the end of an era, marking it
18 fitting to honor the memory and service of these
19 brave men.

20 (13) The story of the 320th Barrage Balloon
21 Battalion serves as a powerful reminder of the con-
22 tributions and sacrifices of African-American sol-
23 diers in World War II, whose patriotic commitment
24 and perseverance in the face of adversity during D-

1 Day deserve national recognition and commemora-
2 tion.

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

4 (a) PRESENTATION AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of
5 the House of Representatives and the President pro tem-
6 pore of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements
7 for the presentation, on behalf of Congress, of a single
8 gold medal of appropriate design in honor of the 320th
9 Barrage Balloon Battalion, collectively, in recognition of
10 their extraordinary heroism and life-saving actions during
11 the D-Day invasion, and their significant contributions to
12 the success of the Allied forces during World War II.

13 (b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For the purposes of the
14 award described in subsection (a), the Secretary of the
15 Treasury (referred to in this Act as the “Secretary”) shall
16 strike the gold medal with suitable emblems, devices, and
17 inscriptions, to be determined by the Secretary.

18 (c) SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.—

19 (1) IN GENERAL.—After the award of the gold
20 medal under subsection (a), the medal shall be given
21 to the Smithsonian Institution, where the medal
22 shall be available for display, as appropriate, and
23 made available for research.

24 (2) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of
25 Congress that the Smithsonian Institution should

1 make the gold medal received under paragraph (1)
2 available elsewhere, particularly at—

3 (A) appropriate locations associated with
4 the 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion, D-Day,
5 World War II, and African American service
6 members;

7 (B) the National Museum of African
8 American History and Culture;

9 (C) the National World War II Museum in
10 New Orleans;

11 (D) the National Museum of the United
12 States Army; and

13 (E) any other location determined appro-
14 priate by the Smithsonian Institution.

15 **SEC. 4. DUPLICATE MEDALS.**

16 The Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in
17 bronze of the gold medal struck under section 3, at a price
18 sufficient to cover the costs thereof, including labor, mate-
19 rials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses.

20 **SEC. 5. STATUS OF MEDALS.**

21 (a) NATIONAL MEDAL.—Medals struck pursuant to
22 this Act are national medals for purposes of chapter 51
23 of title 31, United States Code.

24 (b) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of sections
25 5134 and 5136 of title 31, United States Code, all medals

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

3 **SEC. 6. AUTHORITY TO USE FUND AMOUNTS; PROCEED OF**
4 **SALE.**

5 (a) **AUTHORITY TO USE FUND AMOUNTS.**—There is
6 authorized to be charged against the United States Mint
7 Public Enterprise Fund such amounts as may be nec-
8 essary to pay for the costs of the medals struck under
9 this Act.

10 (b) **PROCEEDS OF SALE.**—Amounts received from the
11 sale of duplicate bronze medals authorized under section
12 4 shall be deposited into the United States Mint Public
13 Enterprise Fund.

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