

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3622

To award a Congressional Gold Medal to Joan Trumpauer Mulholland in recognition of her unique and substantial contributions to American life through her life-long commitment to social justice and equality for all citizens, exhibited both through direct action, at great personal risk, and through ongoing educational activities.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 29, 2025

Mr. BEYER (for himself, Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi, Mrs. BEATTY, Ms. KELLY of Illinois, Ms. NORTON, and Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Financial Services

A BILL

To award a Congressional Gold Medal to Joan Trumpauer Mulholland in recognition of her unique and substantial contributions to American life through her life-long commitment to social justice and equality for all citizens, exhibited both through direct action, at great personal risk, and through ongoing educational activities.

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 “Joan Trumpauer
5 Mulholland Congressional Gold Medal Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

2 Congress finds the following:

3 (1) Joan Trumpauer Mulholland was born on
4 September 14, 1941, in Washington, DC, to Merle
5 (Chandler) Nelson of Oconee, Georgia, and Ealton
6 “Bud” Nelson of Essex, Iowa, and went on to di-
7 rectly challenge America’s racial segregation prac-
8 tices in the American South during the student-led
9 nonviolent civil rights movement of the early 1960s
10 and became a lifelong educator on the benefits of a
11 multi-cultural, pluralistic society.

12 (2) Her expressed Christian faith and under-
13 standing of America’s founding documents led the
14 young Joan to believe, that “all men are created
15 equal” in the eyes of her Creator as well as on the
16 scales of Justice. As a 10 year old girl, Joan’s eyes
17 were opened to the extreme inequality of the races
18 when, while visiting her grandmother in rural Geor-
19 gia, she came upon a dilapidated wooden shack that
20 served as the schoolhouse for the community’s Black
21 children and compared it to the newly constructed
22 block and brick school for the community’s White
23 children. She vowed then that if she ever had a
24 chance, she would work to change this separate but
25 unequal system.

1 (3) Joan graduated from Annandale High
2 School in Northern Virginia in the spring of 1959
3 and began attending Duke University in Durham,
4 North Carolina, that fall. On February 1, 1960, dur-
5 ing her second semester at Duke, four young Black
6 college students entered Woolworth's five and dime
7 store in Greensboro, North Carolina, and challenged
8 its segregated dining policy by sitting in at the
9 Whites-only lunch counter. That event set off a na-
10 tionwide reckoning over Southern segregation prac-
11 tices. When students from North Carolina College
12 visited her church to speak on their experiences chal-
13 lenging the established norms, they invited those
14 present to join the fight. Joan attended that presen-
15 tation and decided this was her chance to help
16 change things and immediately began sitting in with
17 other like-minded students at downtown Durham's
18 five and dime stores, leading to her first arrest. She
19 also joined the newly formed Student Non-Violent
20 Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and committed
21 herself to working for racial equality through non-
22 violent means, eventually working alongside such
23 Movement luminaries as John Lewis, Julian Bond,
24 Robert Moses, Fannie Lou Hamer, and Dorie and
25 Joyce Ladner.

1 (4) During the summer of 1960, Joan worked
2 with a DC-affiliate of SNCC, the Non-Violent Action
3 Group, to protest local segregation policies in the
4 National Capitol Region, integrating establishments
5 in all 3 locales, including those in her own commu-
6 nity of Arlington, Virginia. In addition, Joan joined
7 the staff of Senator Clair Engel of California and
8 worked in his office on Capitol Hill until the Free-
9 dom Movement once again called for her deeper in-
10 volvement.

11 (5) In the spring of 1961, Joan joined the Con-
12 gress of Racial Equality (CORE) Freedom Rides,
13 working to integrate interstate travel facilities
14 throughout the South. CORE sent her by plane to
15 New Orleans and then by train to Jackson, Mis-
16 sissippi, where she was arrested and placed first in
17 local jails, where she kept a secret diary of her expe-
18 riences—now considered an important historical ar-
19 tifact of the Freedom Rider era. After two weeks in
20 local jails, Joan was sent to Parchman Penitentiary
21 where she, along with other committed activists, was
22 held on death row for challenging the established
23 policies of segregation. Joan was held in the peniten-
24 tiary for more than 60 days until she “worked off”
25 her court fine and was released.

1 (6) In the fall of 1961, Joan was accepted to
2 the Historically Black Tougaloo College on the out-
3 skirts of Jackson to further her education as well as
4 to continue challenging the existing segregated
5 order. She became the first full-time matriculating
6 White student in the history of the college, gar-
7 nering headlines in national newspapers and maga-
8 zines for what was then regarded as “reverse inte-
9 gration”. Also, Joan, along with other Freedom Rid-
10 ers who decided to remain in Jackson, became part
11 of the vanguard of the movement for civil and voting
12 rights in the State of Mississippi. She helped form
13 the Non-Violent Jackson Movement, which imme-
14 diately began challenging segregation on city buses
15 and in public buildings, including courtrooms. It be-
16 came her mission to help the South move on from
17 its polarized and self-defeating system of racial seg-
18 regation and learn to build a more equitable social
19 order.

20 (7) On April 6, 1963, Joan became a member
21 of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., a Black Greek
22 organization. She is recognized as one of the first
23 white members of the esteemed Sorority.

24 (8) Joan also committed herself more deeply to
25 the non-violent philosophy of protest through her

1 reading of works by Henry David Thoreau and
2 Mohandas Gandhi. Joan's commitment to non-
3 violence was sorely tested during the May 28, 1963,
4 Jackson Woolworth's sit-in, which she joined after
5 one of her classmates was knocked from his stool
6 and brutally kicked by a violent bystander and then
7 arrested by the police. Joan took his place at the
8 counter and for the next two-and-a-half hours faced
9 the ire of a gathering mob as they jeered and then
10 punched, pulled, and assaulted the demonstrators,
11 dousing them with ketchup and mustard, salt and
12 sugar, and calling them all manner of racist slurs as
13 attempted to maintain their "Southern Way of
14 Life". Joan and her colleagues held their positions
15 at the counter and their refusal to strike back at
16 those assaulting them won the hearts of many who
17 saw the now-iconic photograph of the Jackson sit-in
18 and helped turn the tide in the fight for equal treat-
19 ment of all Americans.

20 (9) The Jackson Woolworth's sit-in triggered
21 additional massive nonviolent demonstrations for
22 civil rights within the city of Jackson in which more
23 than 1,000 youth, including Joan, were arrested for
24 challenging segregation. For her role in the Jackson
25 Movement, Joan was targeted for death by the local

1 Ku Klux Klan, as were a number of her colleagues,
2 including NAACP leader Medgar Evers, who would,
3 indeed, be assassinated two weeks to the day after
4 the Woolworth's sit in at his home in Jackson. Dur-
5 ing the summer of 1963, Joan moved back to Wash-
6 ington, DC, where she attended Evers's burial at Ar-
7 lington Cemetery.

8 (10) In all, Joan participated in more than
9 three-dozen direct action campaigns throughout the
10 South during her college years, including those in
11 Rock Hill, South Carolina and Baltimore, Maryland,
12 before graduating from Tougaloo College in the
13 spring of 1964 and moving back to her native Vir-
14 ginia to begin her adult life. She started her working
15 career as a clerk for the Smithsonian Institution be-
16 fore transferring to join the newly forming Commu-
17 nity Relations Service, "America's Peacemaker",
18 first housed in the Department of Commerce and
19 later with the Department of Justice. During this
20 time, Joan remained active in the civil rights field,
21 participating in the Selma to Montgomery March in
22 1965 and in the March Against Fear in 1966.

23 (11) Joan eventually married and left public
24 service to start a family. Once her five boys were
25 school-age, Joan rejoined the workforce as a teach-

1 er’s assistant in the Arlington County Public
2 Schools, where she became known for encouraging a
3 multi-cultural approach to learning, pulling from her
4 many world travels and her knowledge of sociology
5 to help immigrants appreciate their own cultures
6 while helping them integrate into the American way
7 of life. After more than 30 years as an educator,
8 Joan retired and embarked on a third career as a
9 civil rights ambassador, traveling the country talking
10 about her experiences and encouraging others to get
11 involved in public life to make a difference.

12 (12) For her service in the Civil Rights Move-
13 ment and as an ambassador of nonviolence, Joan
14 has been awarded many honors, including the He-
15 roes Against Hate Award from the Anti-Defamation
16 League, the National Civil Rights Museum’s Free-
17 dom Award, the International Civil Rights Museum’s
18 Trailblazer Award, the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority’s
19 Award of Honor, and the Simeon Booker Award for
20 Courage. In February of 2023, Joan was honored by
21 the Virginia General Assembly and was received on
22 the Floor of the Virginia State Senate “for her inimi-
23 table role in the civil rights movement of the 1960s
24 and her ongoing commitment to educating others
25 about equality and social justice”. In May of 2023,

1 she was awarded an honorary Doctorate of Humane
2 Letters by her alma mater, Tougaloo College, for her
3 service to humanity.

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

5 (a) PRESENTATION AUTHORIZATION.—The Speaker
6 of the House of Representatives and the President pro
7 tempore of the Senate shall make appropriate arrange-
8 ments for the presentation, on behalf of the Congress, of
9 a gold medal of appropriate design to Joan Trumpauer
10 Mulholland, in recognition of her unique and substantial
11 contributions to American life through her life-long com-
12 mitment to social justice and equality for all citizens, ex-
13 hibited both through direct action, at great personal risk,
14 and through ongoing educational activities.

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

21 (c) DISPOSITION OF MEDAL.—Following the presen-
22 tation described in subsection (a), the gold medal shall be
23 given to Joan Trumpauer Mulholland or, if unavailable,
24 to her son, Loki Mulholland.

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

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

6 **SEC. 5. STATUS OF MEDALS.**

7 (a) NATIONAL MEDALS.—The medals struck pursu-
8 ant to this Act are national medals for purposes of chapter
9 51 of title 31, United States Code.

10 (b) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of sections
11 5134 and 5136 of title 31, United States Code, all medals
12 struck under this Act shall be considered to be numismatic
13 items.

14 **SEC. 6. AUTHORITY TO USE FUND AMOUNTS; PROCEEDS OF**
15 **SALE.**

16 (a) AUTHORITY TO USE FUND AMOUNTS.—There is
17 authorized to be charged against the United States Mint
18 Public Enterprise Fund such amounts as may be nec-
19 essary to pay for the cost of the medals struck under this
20 Act.

21 (b) PROCEEDS OF SALE.—Amounts received from the
22 sale of duplicate bronze medals authorized under section
23 4 shall be deposited into the United States Mint Public
24 Enterprise Fund.

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