

114TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 363

To award a Congressional gold medal, collectively, to the First Rhode Island Regiment, in recognition of their dedicated service during the Revolutionary War.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 14, 2015

Mr. CICILLINE (for himself, Mr. BECERRA, Ms. BORDALLO, Mr. BUTTERFIELD, Mr. CARTWRIGHT, Mr. COSTA, Ms. EDWARDS, Mr. HASTINGS, Mr. LANGEVIN, Mr. MCGOVERN, Mr. MEEKS, Mr. POLIQUIN, Mr. RANGEL, and Ms. SEWELL of Alabama) 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

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## A BILL

To award a Congressional gold medal, collectively, to the First Rhode Island Regiment, in recognition of their dedicated service during the Revolutionary War.

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 “First Rhode Island  
5 Regiment Congressional Gold Medal Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

2 Congress makes the following findings:

3 (1) During the winter of Valley Forge, from  
4 1777–1778, the Continental Army had difficulty re-  
5 cruiting the necessary quotas of men set by the Con-  
6 gress.

7 (2) At the same time, the State of Rhode Island  
8 was ordered to supply two battalions while faced  
9 with the occupation of the City of Newport by the  
10 British.

11 (3) In January 1778, at the urging of Brigadier  
12 General James Varnum, General George Washington  
13 wrote to Governor Nicholas Cooke of the State of  
14 Rhode Island requesting assistance recruiting men  
15 for the Continental Line.

16 (4) On February 14, 1778, the Rhode Island  
17 General Assembly voted to allow the enlistment of  
18 “every able-bodied negro, mulatto, or Indian man  
19 slave”.

20 (5) In addition, the Rhode Island General As-  
21 sembly provided that any enlisted slave “upon his  
22 passing muster before Colonel Christopher Greene,  
23 be immediately discharged from the service of his  
24 master or mistress, and be absolutely free as though  
25 he had never been incumbered and be incumbered  
26 with any kind of servitude or slavery.”.

1           (6) As a result, between February 1778 and  
2           June 1778, Colonel Christopher Greene, Lt. Colonel  
3           Jeremiah Olney and Major Samuel Ward recruited  
4           almost 200 men of African and Native American de-  
5           scend who formed the core of the First Rhode Island  
6           Regiment.

7           (7) The First Rhode Island Regiment became  
8           among the first units in American History in which  
9           men of every race and ethnicity were recruited to  
10          serve.

11          (8) On August 28, 1778, at the Battle of  
12          Rhode Island, following an attempted siege of Brit-  
13          ish-occupied Newport along with the newly allied  
14          French fleet, the First Rhode Island Regiment acted  
15          heroically in holding back Hessian forces and caus-  
16          ing them to retreat.

17          (9) During the Battle of Rhode Island, the  
18          First Rhode Island Regiment's losses included three  
19          killed, nine wounded and eleven missing soldiers.

20          (10) For an additional 5 years, the First Rhode  
21          Island Regiment fought bravely to win American  
22          independence including at Fort Oswego, Saratoga,  
23          and Yorktown.

24          (11) On June 13, 1783, at Saratoga, the First  
25          Rhode Island Regiment was demobilized.

1           (12) Their commander, Colonel Jeremiah  
2 Olney, praised the Regiment for “faithfully pre-  
3 serving in the best of causes, in every stage of serv-  
4 ice, with unexampled fortitude and patience through  
5 all the danger and toils of a long and severe war”.

6           (13) Afterwards, some veterans of the First  
7 Rhode Island Regiment had to consistently resist ef-  
8 forts at re-enslavement and fought for back wages  
9 from the Rhode Island General Assembly.

10           (14) According to the Rhode Island State Ar-  
11 chives, the First Rhode Island Regiment included at  
12 least the following soldiers: Babcock, Priamus (Pri-  
13 mus); Bent, Prince; Bours, Cato; Brown, Priamus  
14 (Primus); Burk, Africa; Burroughs, John; Car-  
15 penter, Cudgo; Champlin, Dick; Champlin, Jack;  
16 Champlin, July; Champlin, Newport; Champlin,  
17 Sharper; Champlin, York; Clark, James;  
18 Coddington, Jack; Fones, Jack; Gardner, Cuff;  
19 Gardner, Hercules; Gardner, Minkl; Gardner,  
20 Preamus (Primus); Gardner, Rutter; Gray, Ebe-  
21 nezer; Green, Cuff; Greene, Cato; Greene, Jack;  
22 Greene, Pero; Greene, William; Hammond, Prince;  
23 Harriss, Cesar; Hazard, Backus; Hazard, Jabin;  
24 Hazard, Jacob; Hazard, Peter; Hazard, Peter;  
25 Lefavour, Thom; Mason, Warsen; Mawney, Cyrus;

1 Minturn, Jack; Mowrey, Pero; Nichols, Thomas;  
2 Perry, Ganset; Phillips, Philow; Pierce, Titus; Pot-  
3 ter, David; Randall, Prince; Rhodes, Bristol; Rhodes,  
4 Priamus; Rhodes, Richard; Rhodes, Samuel; Rich-  
5 mond, Ebenezer; Robinson, Mingo; Rodman, Isaac;  
6 Rodman, Mingo; Rodman, Prince; Rose, Cesar;  
7 Saltonstall, Brittain; Saunders, Sampson; Sheldon,  
8 Cesar; Slave; Slave; Smith, Juba; Sweeling, Query;  
9 Talbot, Sigby; Tanner, Quam; Tillinghast, Cuff;  
10 Updike, Cesar; Updike, Moses; Vaughan, Prince;  
11 Vernon, Cato; Watson, Fortune; Wells, Cesar;  
12 Wickes, Nat; and Willbour, Boston.

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

14 (a) AWARD AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of the  
15 House of Representatives and the President pro tempore  
16 of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements for the  
17 award, on behalf of the Congress, of a single gold medal  
18 of appropriate design to the First Rhode Island Regiment,  
19 collectively in recognition of their dedicated service during  
20 the Revolutionary War.

21 (b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For the purposes of the  
22 award referred to in subsection (a), the Secretary of the  
23 Treasury (hereafter in this Act referred to as the “Sec-  
24 retary”) shall strike the gold medal with suitable emblems,

1 devices, and inscriptions, to be determined by the Sec-  
2 retary.

3 (c) SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.—

4 (1) IN GENERAL.—Following the award of the  
5 gold medal in honor of the First Rhode Island Regi-  
6 ment of the Revolutionary War under subsection (a),  
7 the gold medal shall be given to the Smithsonian In-  
8 stitution, where it will be displayed as appropriate  
9 and made available for research.

10 (2) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of  
11 Congress that the Smithsonian Institution should  
12 make the gold medal received under paragraph (1)  
13 available for display elsewhere, particularly at other  
14 appropriate locations associated with the First  
15 Rhode Island Regiment of the Revolutionary War.

16 **SEC. 4. DUPLICATE MEDALS.**

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

22 **SEC. 5. STATUS OF MEDALS.**

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

1           (b) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of section  
2 5134 of title 31, United States Code, all medals struck  
3 under this Act shall be considered to be numismatic items.

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