

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 5521

To authorize the President to posthumously award the Medal of Honor to Marcelino Serna for acts of valor as a private in the Army during World War I.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 18, 2023

Ms. ESCOBAR (for herself, Mr. CASTRO of Texas, and Mr. VARGAS) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Armed Services

A BILL

To authorize the President to posthumously award the Medal of Honor to Marcelino Serna for acts of valor as a private in the Army during World War I.

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. FINDINGS.**

4 Congress finds the following:

5 (1) Military service is one of the most admired
6 and respected vocations any one can embark upon
7 knowing that their commitment is to something far
8 greater than oneself, and we value such military

1 service because it is dedicated to upholding, defend-
2 ing, and preserving the constitution.

3 (2) While historically many were drafted into
4 service before the military became an all-volunteer
5 service in 1973, there were still individuals who vol-
6 unteered to serve without being drafted, and people
7 of all walks of life, including new immigrants, have
8 sought to demonstrate their love, commitment, and
9 loyalty to this country by volunteering their lives to
10 service.

11 (3) Private Marcelino Serna was one such im-
12 migrant seeking to demonstrate his love, commit-
13 ment, and loyalty to his country; born in Chihuahua,
14 Mexico, Private Serna is part of a legacy of immi-
15 grant soldiers fighting for the United States, eager
16 to pursue the American Dream; in 1917, without
17 hesitation, he volunteered to serve in the U.S.
18 Armed Forces against Germany at the age of 20.

19 (4) Private Serna was placed in the 355th In-
20 fantry of the 89th Division, and upon his arrival in
21 France, when it was discovered that he was not a
22 U.S. citizen, he was given the option to return home,
23 however, Private Serna made the valiant decision to
24 serve the United States, his adoptive home.

1 (5) In recognition of his courageous actions,
2 Private Serna became the most decorated World
3 War I veteran in Texas, with awards from the
4 United States, France, Italy and the United King-
5 dom, which include: the World War I Victory Medal,
6 two Purple Hearts, the French Medaille Militaire,
7 two French Croix de Guerre, a French Medaille
8 commemorative, the British War Medal, the Italian
9 Croce al Merito di Guerra, the French Verdun, and
10 the St. Mihiel Medals, as well as being posthumously
11 awarded Texas' Lone Star Medal of Valor in 2016.

12 (6) The aforementioned awards recognize Pri-
13 vate Serna's demonstrated bravery and remarkable
14 service to his country in World War I, during which
15 time, as detailed in the military's official citation for
16 his receipt of the Distinguished Service Cross and in
17 the Texas Handbook Online, Private Serna single-
18 handedly fought, killed, and captured enemy fighters
19 in the French theater.

20 (7) White contemporaries of Private Serna who
21 engaged in similar courageous acts during World
22 War I have been rightfully recognized for their valor
23 with the Medal of Honor; however Private Serna was
24 reportedly passed over for the Medal of Honor be-

1 cause he did not know enough English to be pro-
2 moted.

3 (8) On May 7, 2021, recognizing that acts of
4 valor performed by minority service members like
5 Private Serna have gone unrecognized, a bipartisan
6 Texas State House and Senate Committee voted to
7 unanimously award Private Serna the Texas Legisla-
8 tive Medal of Honor.

9 (9) For his conspicuous gallantry, unwavering
10 commitment, and heroic actions above and beyond
11 the call of duty to the United States of America,
12 Private Marcelino Serna has long earned the Medal
13 of Honor, an award that would allow his descend-
14 ants, fellow Texans, and Americans everywhere to
15 recognize his heroic deeds.

16 **SEC. 2. AUTHORIZATION FOR AWARD OF THE MEDAL OF**
17 **HONOR TO MARCELINO SERNA FOR ACTS OF**
18 **VALOR DURING WORLD WAR I.**

19 (a) AUTHORIZATION.—Notwithstanding the time lim-
20 itations specified in section 7274 of title 10, United States
21 Code, or any other time limitation with respect to the
22 awarding of certain medals to persons who served in the
23 Armed Forces, the President may posthumously award the
24 Medal of Honor under section 7272 of such title to

1 Marcelino Serna for the acts of valor described in the sub-
2 section (b).

3 (b) ACTS OF VALOR DESCRIBED.—The acts of valor
4 described in this subsection are the actions of Marcelino
5 Serna as a private in the Army during World War I, for
6 which he was previously awarded the Distinguished-Serv-
7 ice Cross.

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