

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 8521

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 23, 2024

Mr. BEYER (for himself, Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi, Mr. ESPAILLAT, Ms. WILLIAMS of Georgia, Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN, Ms. CLARKE of New York, Mrs. FOUSHEE, Ms. WEXTON, Mr. BISHOP of Georgia, Mrs. BEATTY, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Ms. NORTON, Mr. CONNOLLY, Mr. HORSFORD, Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia, Mr. MEEKS, Mr. CLYBURN, and Mr. SCOTT of Virginia) 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,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Joan Trumpauer
3 Mulholland Congressional Gold Medal Act”.

4 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

5 Congress finds the following:

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

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

1 chance, she would work to change this separate but
2 unequal system.

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

1 Robert Moses, Fannie Lou Hamer, and Dorie and
2 Joyce Ladner.

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

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

1 tiary for more than 60 days until she “worked off”
2 her court fine and was released.

3 (6) In the fall of 1961, Joan was accepted to
4 the Historically Black Tougaloo College on the out-
5 skirts of Jackson to further her education as well as
6 to continue challenging the existing segregated
7 order. She became the first full-time matriculating
8 White student in the history of the college, gar-
9 nering headlines in national newspapers and maga-
10 zines for what was then regarded as “reverse inte-
11 gration”. Also, Joan, along with other Freedom Rid-
12 ers who decided to remain in Jackson, became part
13 of the vanguard of the movement for civil and voting
14 rights in the state of Mississippi. She helped form
15 the Non-Violent Jackson Movement, which imme-
16 diately began challenging segregation on city buses
17 and in public buildings, including courtrooms. It be-
18 came her mission to help the South move on from
19 its polarized and self-defeating system of racial seg-
20regation and learn to build a more equitable social
21 order.

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

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

22 (9) The Jackson Woolworth's sit-in triggered
23 additional massive nonviolent demonstrations for
24 civil rights within the city of Jackson in which more
25 than 1,000 youth, including Joan, were arrested for

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

10 (10) In all, Joan participated in more than
11 three-dozen direct action campaigns throughout the
12 South during her college years, including those in
13 Rock Hill, South Carolina and Baltimore, Maryland,
14 before graduating from Tougaloo College in the
15 spring of 1964 and moving back to her native Vir-
16 ginia to begin her adult life. She started her working
17 career as a clerk for the Smithsonian Institution be-
18 fore transferring to join the newly forming Commu-
19 nity Relations Service, "America's Peacemaker",
20 first housed in the Department of Commerce and
21 later with the Department of Justice. During this
22 time, Joan remained active in the civil rights field,
23 participating in the Selma to Montgomery March in
24 1965 and in the March Against Fear in 1966.

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

15 (12) For her service in the Civil Rights Move-
16 ment and as an ambassador of nonviolence, Joan
17 has been awarded many honors, including the He-
18 roes Against Hate Award from the Anti-Defamation
19 League, the National Civil Rights Museum’s Free-
20 dom Award, the International Civil Rights Museum’s
21 Trailblazer Award, the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority’s
22 Award of Honor, and the Simeon Booker Award for
23 Courage. In February of 2023, Joan was honored by
24 the Virginia General Assembly and was received on
25 the Floor of the Virginia State Senate “for her inim-

1 itable role in the civil rights movement of the 1960s
2 and her ongoing commitment to educating others
3 about equality and social justice”. In May of 2023,
4 she was awarded an honorary Doctorate of Humane
5 Letters by her alma mater, Tougaloo College, for her
6 service to humanity.

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

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

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

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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