

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 4528

To award posthumously a Congressional Gold Medal to Marshall Walter “Major” Taylor in recognition of his significance to the nation as an athlete, trailblazer, role model, and equal rights advocate.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 12, 2024

Mr. BRAUN (for himself and Mr. WARNOCK) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs

A BILL

To award posthumously a Congressional Gold Medal to Marshall Walter “Major” Taylor in recognition of his significance to the nation as an athlete, trailblazer, role model, and equal rights advocate.

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 “Marshall Walter
5 ‘Major’ Taylor Congressional Gold Medal Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) Marshall Walter “Major” Taylor was born
2 in Indianapolis, Indiana, on November 26, 1878, to
3 Black parents who likely had been enslaved in Ken-
4 tucky, and died impoverished on June 21, 1932, in
5 a hospital charity ward in Chicago, Illinois.

6 (2) As a child, Taylor spent considerable time
7 at the home of a wealthy White family in Indianap-
8 olis who employed his father as a coachman, treated
9 the Black youngster as an equal to their son, Daniel
10 Southard, and gave Taylor his first bicycle.

11 (3) Taylor acquired the nickname “Major” in
12 his youth when he performed bicycle tricks outside
13 his workplace, the Hay & Willits bike shop in Indi-
14 anapolis, while wearing a military-style jacket, and
15 he won his first bike race in 1890 at age 11.

16 (4) Taylor moved to Worcester, Massachusetts,
17 with his employer, mentor, and racing manager,
18 Louis D. “Birdie” Munger, in 1895, and became
19 known in his sport not only for his lightning sprints
20 but also for his good sportsmanship, disciplined
21 physical training, and devotion to his religion.

22 (5) Taylor received a professional racing license
23 from the League of American Wheelmen at age 18
24 despite the League’s 1894 “whites only” rule for
25 amateur membership and made his professional

1 debut in December 1896 in a 6-day race at Madison
2 Square Garden in New York, New York, defeating
3 national champion Eddie Bald in a half-mile exhi-
4 bition race on the eve of the 6-day endurance contest
5 and placing eighth in the 6-day track cycling com-
6 petition.

7 (6) In 1897, Taylor earned a spot alongside 4
8 White men on one of the first racially integrated
9 professional sports teams in the United States, a 5-
10 man squad that won a Boston v. Philadelphia pur-
11 suit race held in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

12 (7) Taylor set numerous world speed records
13 and held 7 world records at the end of 1898 for var-
14 ious distances, including the coveted 1 mile, and he
15 further lowered the 1-mile world record to 1 minute,
16 19 seconds in 1899.

17 (8) Taylor overcame racial prejudice throughout
18 his career, showing remarkable dignity in the face of
19 closed doors and open hostility, including race-based
20 denial of meals and lodging, racist cartoons and
21 caricatures, bureaucratic maneuvers that threatened
22 his racing eligibility, race-based exclusion from cer-
23 tain tracks and competitions on the national circuit,
24 plots and tactics by White opponents to box him in
25 on the track, cause him to crash, or prevent him

1 from competing in the first place, a post-race chok-
2 ing by a competitor on a racetrack in Taunton, Mas-
3 sachusetts, that left Taylor unconscious, objections
4 by White neighbors to his purchase of a house in
5 Worcester, and a death threat signed “White Rid-
6 ers” that was delivered in Savannah, Georgia.

7 (9) Taylor was one of the first Black athletes
8 to secure corporate sponsorship, representing bicycle
9 brands such as Iver Johnson, Sager, Stearns, and
10 Orient, and he became one of the wealthiest Black
11 men in the United States and a substantial bene-
12 factor to his church in Worcester.

13 (10) Taylor pioneered the use of an innovative
14 adjustable handlebar stem, using the extension to
15 improve his aerodynamic position, and to this day
16 this type of outrigger is called a Major Taylor stem.

17 (11) Taylor won the world 1-mile sprint cham-
18 pionship in Montreal on August 10, 1899, becoming
19 the second Black athlete to win a world title in any
20 sport, and won the United States championship later
21 that year.

22 (12) As a devout Christian, Taylor refused for
23 years to race on Sundays, and accordingly he turned
24 down lucrative offers to race in Europe, until, by vir-
25 tue of his international superstardom, he could nego-

1 tiate a “no Sundays” provision in a European racing
2 contract for 1901.

3 (13) Finding refuge in France, where he was
4 still often the only Black racer on the track, Taylor
5 defeated every European champion during the
6 course of 6 tours of Europe from 1901 to 1909 and
7 also had numerous racing successes in Australia and
8 New Zealand.

9 (14) After retiring from racing in 1910 and
10 finding little success in the business world, Taylor
11 wrote his 1928 autobiography, “The Fastest Bicycle
12 Rider in the World”, with an appeal for “simple jus-
13 tice, equal rights, and a square deal” for African
14 Americans in sports and “every . . . human endeav-
15 or”, as well as advice for youth on good sportsman-
16 ship and clean living.

17 (15) Drawing on exemplary determination and
18 perseverance, Taylor demonstrated not only domi-
19 nant athletic prowess but also tremendous strength
20 of character as he broke racial barriers, reached the
21 pinnacle of international sport, and served as a role
22 model for generations to come.

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

24 (a) PRESENTATION AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of
25 the House of Representatives and the President pro tem-

1 pore of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements
2 for the posthumous presentation, on behalf of the Con-
3 gress, of a gold medal of appropriate design in commemo-
4 ration of Marshall Walter “Major” Taylor, in recognition
5 of his significance to the nation as an athlete, trailblazer,
6 role model, and equal rights advocate.

7 (b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For purposes of the
8 presentation referred to in subsection (a), the Secretary
9 of the Treasury (referred to in this Act as the “Sec-
10 retary”) shall strike a gold medal with suitable emblems,
11 devices, and inscriptions, to be determined by the Sec-
12 retary. The design shall bear an image of, and an inscrip-
13 tion of the name of Marshall Walter “Major” Taylor.

14 (c) DISPOSITION OF MEDAL.—Following the presen-
15 tation of the gold medal under subsection (a), the gold
16 medal shall be given to the great-granddaughter of Mar-
17 shall Walter “Major” Taylor, Karen Donovan.

18 **SEC. 4. DUPLICATE MEDALS.**

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

1 **SEC. 5. STATUS OF MEDALS.**

2 (a) NATIONAL MEDALS.—The medals struck under
3 this Act are national medals for purposes of chapter 51
4 of title 31, United States Code.

5 (b) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of sections
6 5134 and 5136 of title 31, United States Code, all medals
7 struck under this Act shall be considered to be numismatic
8 items.

9 **SEC. 6. AUTHORITY TO USE FUND AMOUNTS; PROCEEDS OF**
10 **SALE.**

11 (a) AUTHORITY TO USE FUND AMOUNTS.—There is
12 authorized to be charged against the United States Mint
13 Public Enterprise Fund such amounts as may be nec-
14 essary to pay for the costs of the medals struck under
15 this Act.

16 (b) PROCEEDS OF SALES.—Amounts received from
17 the sale of duplicate bronze medals authorized under sec-
18 tion 4 shall be deposited into the United States Mint Pub-
19 lic Enterprise Fund.

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