

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 4988

To award a Congressional Gold Medal, collectively, to the individuals who fought for or with the United States against the armed forces of Imperial Japan in the Pacific theater and the impacted Sasaki people on Attu, whose lives, culture, and community were irrevocably changed from December 8, 1941, to August 15, 1945.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

AUGUST 1, 2024

Mr. HEINRICH (for himself, Mr. BENNET, Mr. HOEVEN, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. LUJÁN, Mr. MERKLEY, Ms. SMITH, Ms. STABENOW, and Mr. WHITEHOUSE) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs

A BILL

To award a Congressional Gold Medal, collectively, to the individuals who fought for or with the United States against the armed forces of Imperial Japan in the Pacific theater and the impacted Sasaki people on Attu, whose lives, culture, and community were irrevocably changed from December 8, 1941, to August 15, 1945.

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 “Defenders of Bataan,
5 Corregidor, and Attu Congressional Gold Medal Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

2 Congress finds the following:

3 (1) Hours after the attacks on Pearl Harbor,
4 Hawaii Territory, on December 7, 1941, Imperial
5 Japanese forces launched coordinated attacks
6 throughout Asia, striking Malaya, Thailand, Singa-
7 pore, Shanghai, Hong Kong, the Philippines, and
8 the United States territories of Guam, Midway Is-
9 land, Wake Island, and Howland Island.

10 (2) For the next 7 months, undermanned
11 United States forces in the Pacific fought with out-
12 dated weapons, expired ammunition, and without re-
13 inforcement or resupply to their besieged island
14 posts.

15 (3) On the first day of United States participa-
16 tion in World War II, December 8, 1941, the “first
17 to fire” in the Philippines at the Imperial Japanese
18 were the New Mexico National Guardsmen from the
19 200th and 515th Coast Artillery (AA) regiments, the
20 successors to the famed “Rough Riders” of the
21 Spanish-American War, who had only recently ar-
22 rived in the Philippines where they were stationed at
23 Fort Stotsenburg north of Manila with the mission
24 of defending Clark Field.

1 (4) Filipino soldiers and civilians valiantly
2 fought alongside and as part of the United States
3 Armed Forces and were integral to their war efforts.

4 (5) By the end of December 1941, all United
5 States forces on Luzon Island in the Philippines
6 withdrew to the Bataan Peninsula of the island,
7 where, for the next 4 months, with neither air nor
8 sea defenses, an estimated 12,000 United States and
9 at least 63,000 Filipino troops and 20,000 Filipino
10 civilians endured siege conditions.

11 (6) On April 9, 1942, Major General Edward
12 P. King, Jr. surrendered the United States and Fili-
13 pino forces on the Bataan Peninsula. The Imperial
14 Japanese Army forced thousands of troops and civil-
15 ians to assemble at the port of Mariveles at the tip
16 of Bataan and other locations along the peninsula
17 for a 65-mile forced march. This forced trek came
18 to be known as the “Bataan Death March”.

19 (7) During the Bataan Death March, approxi-
20 mately 700 people of the United States and 6,000
21 to 10,000 Filipinos were killed. Survivors were sent
22 to Camp O’Donnell where 26,000 more Filipino pris-
23 oners died.

24 (8) On May 6, 1942, Lieutenant General Jona-
25 than Wainwright surrendered the fortress islands of

1 Corregidor (Fort Mills), Fort Drum, Fort Frank,
2 and Fort Hughes in Manila Bay. The complete sur-
3 render of the remaining United States and Filipino
4 forces in the Philippines occurred on June 9, 1942.

5 (9) Included in the surrenders in the Phil-
6 ippines were female nurses of the United States
7 Army and Navy and the Philippine Army and civil-
8 ian volunteers who became the first large group of
9 United States women in combat and, counted with
10 the Army and Navy nurses surrendered on Guam in
11 December 1941, comprised the first group of United
12 States military women taken captive and imprisoned
13 by an enemy.

14 (10) On June 7, 1942, the Imperial Japanese
15 invaded Attu, homeland of the impacted Siskinaâ
16 people, who were all subsequently taken prisoner by
17 the Japanese troops on Attu for 3 months and held
18 as imprisoned slaves for 3 years and 3 months in
19 Otaru, Japan. After the war, the impacted Siskinaâ
20 people were not allowed to return to Attu.

21 (11) On May 11, 1943, 12,500 United States
22 Armed Forces personnel entered Attu, which was oc-
23 cupied by about 2,500 Japanese military personnel.
24 Between this date and May 29, 1943, those brave
25 members of the United States Armed Forces fought

1 to reclaim Attu. This victory cost the United States
2 about 550 of its very finest, who laid down their
3 lives in the service of their nation.

4 (12) Between January 1942 and August 1945,
5 thousands of prisoners of war from the United
6 States who had survived the surrenders throughout
7 the Pacific were shipped in unmarked freighters and
8 vessels.

9 (13) It is time to recognize the defenders of Ba-
10 taan, Corregidor, Attu and other places throughout
11 the Pacific who were ordinary men and women who
12 found uncommon courage in extraordinary cir-
13 cumstances.

14 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

15 In this Act:

16 (1) IMPACTED SASKINAË PEOPLE.—The term
17 “impacted Saskinaë people” refers to the indigenous
18 peoples of the Near Islands, which includes Attu and
19 the westernmost Alaskan islands, who were on the
20 islands during the period beginning on December 8,
21 1941, and ending on August 15, 1945.

22 (2) INDIVIDUALS WHO FOUGHT FOR OR WITH
23 THE UNITED STATES.—The term “individuals who
24 fought for or with the United States”—

25 (A) includes any individual who—

1 (i) was in the Pacific theater at any
2 time during the period beginning on De-
3 cember 8, 1941, and ending on August 15,
4 1945; and

5 (ii)(I) served honorably as a member
6 of the United States Armed Forces or at
7 the command of the United States Armed
8 Forces in the defensive battles in the Pa-
9 cific from December 8, 1941 to June 9,
10 1942; or

11 (II) became a prisoner of war of Im-
12 perial Japan during World War II until
13 August 15, 1945, including civilians who
14 the Imperial Japanese Armed Forces con-
15 sidered military prisoners of war and re-
16 ceived veterans status after the war; and

17 (B) does not include a member of the Pa-
18 cific Fleet or the Hawaiian Department.

19 (3) PACIFIC THEATER.—The term “Pacific the-
20 ater” means Shanghai, the Central Pacific Area, the
21 Southwest Pacific Area, and the Aleutian Islands.

22 (4) RESISTANCE OR BATTLE.—The term “re-
23 sistance or battle” includes an action in and around
24 Shanghai, Tientsin, Guam, Wake Island, the Dutch

1 East Indies, Borneo, the Philippines, Midway Island,
2 or the Aleutian Islands.

3 (5) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
4 the Secretary of the Treasury.

5 **SEC. 4. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

6 (a) AWARD AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of the
7 House of Representatives and the President pro tempore
8 of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements for the
9 collective award, on behalf of Congress, of a gold medal
10 of appropriate design to the individuals who fought for
11 or with the United States to defend Bataan, Corregidor,
12 Attu, and other places in the Pacific theater, and to the
13 impacted Saskinaâ people, in recognition of their personal
14 sacrifice and service during World War II.

15 (b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For purposes of the
16 award under subsection (a), the Secretary shall strike the
17 gold medal with suitable emblems, devices, and inscrip-
18 tions, to be determined by the Secretary.

19 (c) SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.—

20 (1) IN GENERAL.—Following the award of the
21 gold medal under subsection (a), the gold medal
22 shall be given to the National Museum of American
23 History of the Smithsonian Institution, where it
24 shall be displayed as appropriate and made available
25 for research.

1 (2) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of
2 Congress that the National Museum of American
3 History of the Smithsonian Institution should make
4 the gold medal received under paragraph (1) avail-
5 able for display at other locations, particularly at lo-
6 cations that are associated with—

7 (A) the defensive battles of World War II
8 in the Pacific theater from December 8, 1941,
9 to August 15, 1945;

10 (B) the prisoners of war of Imperial
11 Japan;

12 (C) the impacted Saskaïna people; and

13 (D) the defense of the Philippines, Guam,
14 Wake Island, Midway Island, Java, and the
15 Aleutian Islands.

16 **SEC. 5. DUPLICATE MEDALS.**

17 The Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in
18 bronze of the gold medal struck under section 4, at a price
19 sufficient to cover the costs of the medals, including labor,
20 materials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses.

21 **SEC. 6. STATUS OF MEDALS.**

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

1 (b) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of sections
2 5134 and 5136 of title 31, United States Code, all medals
3 struck under this Act shall be considered to be numismatic
4 items.

5 **SEC. 7. AUTHORITY TO USE FUND AMOUNTS; PROCEEDS OF**
6 **SALE.**

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

12 (b) PROCEEDS OF SALE.—Amounts received from the
13 sale of duplicate bronze medals authorized under section
14 5 shall be deposited into the United States Mint Public
15 Enterprise Fund.

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