

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 550

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

SEPTEMBER 23, 2019

Received; read twice and referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and
Urban Affairs

AN ACT

To award a Congressional Gold Medal, collectively, to the United States Merchant Mariners of World War II, in recognition of their dedicated and vital service during World War II.

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 “Merchant Mariners
3 of World War II Congressional Gold Medal Act of 2019”.

4 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

5 Congress finds the following:

6 (1) 2015 marked the 70th anniversary of the
7 Allied victory in World War II and the restoration
8 of peacetime across the European and Pacific thea-
9 ters.

10 (2) The United States Merchant Marine (in
11 this section referred to as the “Merchant Marine”)
12 was integral in providing the link between domestic
13 production and the fighting forces overseas, pro-
14 viding combat equipment, fuel, food, commodities,
15 and raw materials to troops stationed abroad.

16 (3) Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King acknowledged
17 the indispensability of the Merchant Marine to the
18 victory in a 1945 letter stating that, without the
19 support of the Merchant Marine, “the Navy could
20 not have accomplished its mission”.

21 (4) President, and former Supreme Commander
22 of the Allied Forces, Dwight D. Eisenhower ac-
23 knowledged that “through the prompt delivery of
24 supplies and equipment to our armed forces over-
25 seas, and of cargoes representing economic and mili-
26 tary aid to friendly nations, the American Merchant

1 Marine has effectively helped to strengthen the
2 forces of freedom throughout the world”.

3 (5) Military missions and war planning were
4 contingent upon the availability of resources and the
5 Merchant Marine played a vital role in this regard,
6 ensuring the efficient and reliable transoceanic
7 transport of military equipment and both military
8 and civilian personnel.

9 (6) The Merchant Marine provided for the suc-
10 cessful transport of resources and personnel despite
11 consistent and ongoing exposure to enemy combat-
12 ants from both the air and the sea, including from
13 enemy bomber squadrons, submarines, and mines.

14 (7) The efforts of the Merchant Marine were
15 not without sacrifices as the Merchant Marine bore
16 a higher per-capita casualty rate than any other
17 branch of the military during the war.

18 (8) The Merchant Marine proved to be an in-
19 strumental asset on an untold number of occasions,
20 participating in every landing operation by the
21 United States Marine Corps, from Guadalcanal to
22 Iwo Jima.

23 (9) The Merchant Marine provided the bulk
24 tonnage of material necessary for the invasion of
25 Normandy, an invasion which, according to a 1944

1 New York Times article, “would not have been pos-
2 sible without the Merchant Marine”.

3 (10) In assessing the performance of the Mer-
4 chant Marine, General Eisenhower stated, “every
5 man in this Allied command is quick to express his
6 admiration for the loyalty, courage, and fortitude of
7 the officers and men of the Merchant Marine. We
8 count upon their efficiency and their utter devotion
9 to duty as we do our own; they have never failed
10 us”.

11 (11) During a September 1944 speech, Presi-
12 dent Franklin D. Roosevelt stated that the Merchant
13 Marine had “delivered the goods when and where
14 needed in every theater of operations and across
15 every ocean in the biggest, the most difficult, and
16 dangerous transportation job ever undertaken. As
17 time goes on, there will be greater public under-
18 standing of our merchant fleet’s record during this
19 war.”.

20 (12) The feats and accomplishments of the
21 Merchant Marine are deserving of broader public
22 recognition.

23 (13) The United States will be forever grateful
24 and indebted to these merchant mariners for their
25 effective, reliable, and courageous transport of goods

1 and resources in enemy territory throughout thea-
2 ters of every variety in World War II.

3 (14) The goods and resources transported by
4 the Merchant Marine saved thousands of lives and
5 enabled the Allied Powers to claim victory in World
6 War II.

7 (15) The Congressional Gold Medal would be
8 an appropriate way to shed further light on the serv-
9 ice of the merchant mariners in World War II and
10 the instrumental role they played in winning that
11 war.

12 **SEC. 3. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

13 (a) AWARD AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of the
14 House of Representatives and the President pro tempore
15 of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements for the
16 award, on behalf of Congress, of a single gold medal of
17 appropriate design to the United States Merchant Mari-
18 ners of World War II, in recognition of their dedicated
19 and vital service during World War II.

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

25 (c) AMERICAN MERCHANT MARINE MUSEUM.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—Following the award of the
2 gold medal under subsection (a), the gold medal
3 shall be given to the American Merchant Marine
4 Museum, where it will be available for display as ap-
5 propriate and available for research.

6 (2) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of
7 Congress that the American Merchant Marine Mu-
8 seum should make the gold medal given to the Mu-
9 seum under paragraph (1) available for display else-
10 where, particularly at appropriate locations associ-
11 ated with the United States Merchant Marine and
12 that preference should be given to locations affiliated
13 with the United States Merchant Marine.

14 **SEC. 4. DUPLICATE MEDALS.**

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

20 **SEC. 5. STATUS OF MEDALS.**

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

