

112TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1591

To award a Congressional Gold Medal to Raoul Wallenberg, in recognition of his achievements and heroic actions during the Holocaust.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

SEPTEMBER 21, 2011

Mrs. GILLIBRAND (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. LEVIN, and Mr. JOHANNIS) 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 to Raoul Wallenberg, in recognition of his achievements and heroic actions during the Holocaust.

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 “Raoul Wallenberg Cen-
5 tennial Celebration Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 The Congress finds as follows:

8 (1) Raoul Wallenberg was born in Europe on
9 August 4, 1912, to Swedish Christian parents.

1 (2) In 1935, he graduated from the University
2 of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

3 (3) In a letter to his grandfather, Wallenberg
4 wrote of his time in America: “I feel so at home in
5 my little Ann Arbor that I’m beginning to sink down
6 roots here and have a hard time imagining my leav-
7 ing it . . . Every now and then I feel strange when
8 I think about how tiny my own country is and how
9 large and wonderful America is.”

10 (4) Raoul returned to Sweden, where he began
11 a career as a businessman, and afterwards, a Swed-
12 ish diplomat.

13 (5) In 1936, Raoul’s grandfather arranged a
14 position for him at the Holland Bank in Haifa, Pal-
15 estine. There, Raoul began to meet young Jews who
16 had already been forced to flee from Nazi persecu-
17 tion in Germany. Their stories affected him deeply.

18 (6) He was greatly troubled by the fate of Jews
19 in Europe, confiding to actress Viveca Lindfors the
20 horrific plight of Jews under Nazi Europe.

21 (7) Under the direction of President Franklin
22 D. Roosevelt, the War Refugee Board was estab-
23 lished in January 1944, to aid civilians who fell vic-
24 tim to the Nazi and Axis powers in Europe.

1 (8) One of War Refugee Board's top priorities
2 was protection of the 750,000 remaining Jews in
3 Hungary.

4 (9) It was decided that Raoul Wallenberg, aged
5 31 at the time, would be most effective in protecting
6 Jews and victims of the Nazis in Hungary under the
7 War Refugee Board. He was recruited by Iver
8 Olsen, an agent for the United States Office of Stra-
9 tegic Services and sent to Budapest, Hungary, under
10 his official profession as a Swedish diplomat. He was
11 instructed to use passports and other creative means
12 to save as many lives as possible.

13 (10) Wallenberg created a new Swedish pass-
14 port, the Schutzpass, which looked more imposing
15 and official than the actual Swedish passport. He re-
16 portedly put up huge placards of it throughout Bu-
17 dapest to familiarize the Nazis with it. He unilater-
18 ally announced that it granted the holder immunity
19 from the death camps. The Schutzpasses alone are
20 credited with saving 20,000 Jewish lives.

21 (11) In one example of his heroism, Wallenberg
22 was told of a Nazi plot to round up several thousand
23 Jewish women and acted swiftly to save them.
24 Former Wallenberg staffer, Agnes Adachi, recalls
25 the time, when she and her colleagues spent the

1 whole night making approximately 2,000
2 Schutzpasses before 6 a.m. They were all completed
3 and personally delivered to the women in time to
4 save their lives.

5 (12) Using the money the United States depos-
6 ited with the War Refugee Board, Wallenberg was
7 able to purchase approximately 30 buildings, which
8 he used as hospitals, schools, soup kitchens, and safe
9 houses for over 8,000 children whose parents had al-
10 ready been deported or killed.

11 (13) Tommy Lapid, a young boy who was stay-
12 ing with his mother in a Swedish safe house (his fa-
13 ther was already dead), gave an eyewitness account
14 of how his family was helped by Wallenberg and the
15 War Refugee Board: “One morning, a group of
16 Hungarian Fascists came into the house and said
17 that all the able-bodied women must go with them.
18 We knew what this meant. My mother kissed me
19 and I cried and she cried. We knew we were parting
20 forever and she left me there, an orphan to all in-
21 tents and purposes. Then two or three hours later,
22 to my amazement, my mother returned with the
23 other women. It seemed like a mirage, a miracle. My
24 mother was there—she was alive and she was hug-

1 ging me and kissing me, and she said one word:
2 Wallenberg.”.

3 (14) Even as the war was coming to a close,
4 Wallenberg remained vigilant and attentive to the
5 people under his care. Adolf Eichmann, the SS colo-
6 nel charged with the extermination of Jews in East-
7 ern Europe, was determined to exterminate the
8 70,000 Jews kept as prisoners in a guarded ghetto
9 in Budapest. As soon as Wallenberg heard of the
10 plot, he sent Pal Szalay, an Arrow-Crossman senior
11 official, who defected and turned to Wallenberg.
12 Szalay was sent to speak to General Schmidhuber,
13 who was ordered to spearhead the ghetto extermi-
14 nation in Budapest. Szalay informed Schmidhuber
15 that, seeing as the war was coming to an end, if the
16 planned massacre took place, Wallenberg would see
17 to it personally that Schmidhuber would be pros-
18 ecuted as a war criminal and hanged. The plans
19 were ultimately abandoned and considered
20 Wallenberg’s last big victory.

21 (15) Of the 120,000 Jews in Hungary that sur-
22 vived, Raoul Wallenberg, acting under the War Ref-
23 ugee Board, is credited with saving an estimated
24 100,000 of them in a 6-month period.

1 (16) These findings show that Raoul
2 Wallenberg showed exceptional heroism and bravery
3 with his actions during the Holocaust. Working with
4 the War Refugee Board, a United States agency, he
5 was able to save approximately 100,000 Jews in
6 Hungary, many of whom were later able to immi-
7 grate to the United States.

8 (17) Indeed, many American Jews can directly
9 or indirectly attribute their own lives to Raoul
10 Wallenberg's actions during World War II. Many of
11 the people Wallenberg saved have been influential
12 citizens contributing to American institutions and
13 culture, including Congressman Tom Lantos (Feb-
14 ruary 1, 1928–February 11, 2008) and the Liska
15 Rebbe, Rabbi Yoizef (Joseph) Friedlander, who car-
16 ried forth the Liska Hassidic dynasty from Hungary
17 to the United States after being saved by Raoul
18 Wallenberg.

19 (18) His actions and character make him an ex-
20 cellent contender for a Congressional Gold Medal in
21 time for the centennial of his birth, to celebrate his
22 achievements and humanitarian accomplishments.

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 presentation, on behalf of the Congress, of a gold
3 medal of appropriate design to the next of kin or personal
4 representative of Raoul Wallenberg, in recognition of his
5 achievements and heroic actions during the Holocaust.

6 (b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For the purpose of the
7 presentation referred to in subsection (a), the Secretary
8 of the Treasury (in this Act referred to as the “Sec-
9 retary”) shall strike a gold medal with suitable emblems,
10 devices, and inscriptions, to be determined by the Sec-
11 retary.

12 **SEC. 4. DUPLICATE MEDALS.**

13 Under such regulations as the Secretary (in this Act
14 referred to as the “Secretary”) may prescribe, the Sec-
15 retary may strike duplicate medals in bronze of the gold
16 medal struck pursuant to section 3 and sell such duplicate
17 medals at a price sufficient to cover the costs of the dupli-
18 cate medals (including labor, materials, dies, use of ma-
19 chinery, overhead expenses) and the cost of the gold
20 medal.

21 **SEC. 5. STATUS OF MEDALS.**

22 (a) NATIONAL MEDALS.—The medals struck pursu-
23 ant to this Act are national medals for purposes of chapter
24 51 of title 31, United States Code.

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

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

6 (a) AUTHORIZATION OF CHARGES.—There is author-
7 ized to be charged against the United States Mint Public
8 Enterprise Fund, such amounts as may be necessary to
9 pay for the costs of the medals struck pursuant to this
10 Act.

11 (b) PROCEEDS OF SALE.—Amounts received from the
12 sale of duplicate bronze medals under section 4 shall be
13 deposited in the United States Mint Public Enterprise
14 Fund.

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