



**Congressional  
Research Service**

Informing the legislative debate since 1914

---

# Commemorations in Congress: Options for Honoring Individuals, Groups, and Events

**Jacob R. Straus, Coordinator**

Analyst on the Congress

**Craig K. Elwell**

Specialist in Macroeconomic Policy

**Matthew E. Glassman**

Analyst on the Congress

**Garrett Hatch**

Specialist in American National Government

**Valerie Heitshusen**

Analyst on Congress and the Legislative Process

**Kevin R. Kosar**

Analyst in American National Government

May 9, 2014

**Congressional Research Service**

7-5700

[www.crs.gov](http://www.crs.gov)

R43539

## Summary

Since its inception, Congress has used commemorative legislation to express public gratitude for distinguished contributions; dramatize the virtues of individuals, groups, and causes; and perpetuate the remembrance of significant events. During the past two centuries, commemoratives have become an integral part of the American political tradition. They have been used to authorize the minting of commemorative coins and Congressional Gold Medals; fund monuments and memorials; create federal holidays; establish commissions to celebrate important anniversaries; and name public works, scholarships, endowments, fellowships, and historic sites.

Current congressional practice for commemoratives includes a House Rule (Rule XII, clause 5, initially adopted during the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress (1995-1996)) that precludes the introduction or consideration of legislation that commemorates “any remembrance, celebration, or recognition for any purpose through the designation of a special period of time.” Such a rule does not exist in the Senate. This change to House Rules, together with the passage of more restrictive laws, rules, and procedures governing the enactment of several other types of commemoratives, has substantially reduced the time Congress spends considering and adopting such measures.

This report summarizes the evolution of commemorative legislation as well as the laws, rules, and procedures that have been adopted to control the types of commemoratives considered and enacted. Included in the discussion of commemorative options for Congress are those that require legislation, such as

- naming federal buildings, including post offices and other federal structures;
- postage stamps;
- commemorative coins;
- Congressional Gold Medals;
- monuments and memorials, both in the District of Columbia and elsewhere;
- commemorative commissions;
- commemorative observances;
- federal holidays; and
- requesting presidential proclamations.

Also included are commemorative options that do not require legislation. These include

- certificates of recognition;
- floor speeches; and
- flags flown over the U.S. Capitol.

## Contents

Introduction.....	1
Efforts to Curb Commemoratives.....	1
Advisory Commission.....	1
House Ban on Commemorative Legislation.....	2
House Rule XII, Clause 5.....	2
House Republican Caucus Rule 28.....	3
Past Waiver of House Rule XII.....	3
Overview of Options Discussed.....	4
Legislative Options.....	4
Naming Federal Buildings.....	4
Post Offices.....	4
Other Federal Buildings.....	5
Postage Stamps.....	7
Commemorative Coins.....	8
Advisory Coin Committee.....	8
1993 Sense of the Congress Resolution.....	9
1996 Statutory Restrictions.....	9
Abolition of the Citizens Commemorative Coin Advisory Committee (CCCAC).....	9
Committee Rules/Practice.....	10
Outside Advice Sought by Committees.....	10
Congressional Gold Medals.....	10
Monuments and Memorials.....	11
District of Columbia.....	12
Non-District of Columbia.....	13
New Commemorative.....	13
Official Recognition of Commemoratives.....	14
Commemorative Commissions.....	14
Commemorative Observances and Days.....	15
Federal Holidays.....	16
Presidential Proclamations.....	16
Non-Legislative Options.....	16
Certificates of Recognition.....	17
Floor Speeches.....	18
Flags.....	18
House of Representatives.....	18
Senate.....	18
Conclusion.....	19

## Contacts

Author Contact Information.....	19
Key Policy Staff.....	19

## Introduction

Since its inception, Congress has used commemoratives to express public gratitude for distinguished contributions; dramatize the virtues of individuals, groups, and causes; and perpetuate the remembrance of significant events. The first commemoratives were primarily in the form of individually struck medals. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Congress gradually broadened the scope of commemoratives by recommending special days for national observance; funding monuments and memorials; creating federal holidays; authorizing the minting of commemorative coins; and establishing commissions to celebrate important anniversaries. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it became increasingly commonplace for Congress to use commemorative legislation to name buildings and other public works, scholarships, endowments, fellowships, and historic sites.

This report provides a discussion of commemorative options available to Congress. These commemorative options are divided into those that require legislation and those that do not. Types of commemoratives requiring legislative action include naming federal buildings, including post offices; creating postage stamps; minting commemorative coins; awarding of Congressional Gold Medals; authorizing monuments and memorials, both in the District of Columbia and on federal land in other parts of the United States; establishing commemorative commissions; authorizing commemorative observances and federal holidays; and requesting presidential proclamations. Non-legislative options include sending certificates of recognition, making floor speeches, and sending flags flown over the Capitol Building to constituents.

## Efforts to Curb Commemoratives

Beginning in the 1960s, several initiatives were undertaken to reduce the number of commemoratives proposed through legislation. These initiatives were in response to concern that the legislative time spent on commemorative measures was excessive.<sup>1</sup> Efforts to curb commemoratives can be divided into two categories: creating an advisory commission to recommend appropriate commemorations and amending congressional rules on the introduction and consideration of commemorative legislation.

## Advisory Commission

Between the 89<sup>th</sup> Congress (1965-1966) and the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress (1995-1996), several proposals were introduced to shift the responsibility of recommending commemorative celebrations to a presidential commission. First introduced in 1966, the proposed Commission on National Observances and Holidays would have served to review proposals for national observances and “report to the President with respect to any proposal for a national observance which, in the opinion of the Commission, is of national significance.”<sup>2</sup> In both the 89<sup>th</sup> Congress and the 90<sup>th</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Roger H. Davidson, “The New Centralization on Capitol Hill,” *The Review of Politics*, vol. 50, no. 3 (Summer 2008), p. 353; and Craig Volden and Alan E. Wiseman, “Breaking Gridlock: The Determinants of Health Policy Change in Congress,” *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law*, vol. 36, no. 2 (2011), p. 236.

<sup>2</sup> “Commission on National Observances and Holidays,” *Congressional Record*, vol. 112, part 18 (October 3, 1966), p. 24828. The commission would not have been allowed to make recommendations calling for a national observance for any fraternal, political, or religious organization, or a commercial enterprise or product.

Congress (1967-1968),<sup>3</sup> measures were passed by the House, but no further action was taken by the Senate.<sup>4</sup>

## House Ban on Commemorative Legislation

In the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress (1995-1996), the House adopted a new rule to reduce the number of commemorative bills and resolutions introduced and considered by the chamber. House Rule XII, clause 5, prohibits the introduction and consideration of date-specific commemorative legislation. Additionally, Republican Conference Rule 28 prohibits the Republican leader from scheduling commemorative legislation under “suspension of the rules.”<sup>5</sup>

### House Rule XII, Clause 5

As part of the rules adopted by the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress,<sup>6</sup> House Rule XII was amended to preclude the introduction or consideration of any bill, resolution, or amendment that “establishes or expresses any commemoration.” The rule defines a commemoration as any “remembrance, celebration, or recognition for any purpose through the designation of a specified period of time.” Further, in the House Rules Committee’s section-by-section analysis of the House Rules resolution (H.Res. 6, 104<sup>th</sup> Congress), the following explanation was provided on the rule’s intent:

The new ban on date-specific commemorative measures or amendments applies to both the introduction and consideration of any measure containing such a commemorative. This is intended to include measures in which such a commemorative may only be incidental to the overall purpose of the measure. Such measures will be returned to the sponsor if they are dropped in the legislative hopper. The prohibition against consideration also extends to any measures received from the Senate which contain date-specific commemorative. While it does not block their receipt from the other body, it is intended that such measures would not be referred to the appropriate committee of the House or be considered by the House. Instead, they would simply be held at the desk without further action. Should such a commemorative be included in a conference report or Senate amendment to a House bill, the entire conference report or Senate amendment would be subject to a point of order.

While the ban does not apply to commemorative [sic] which do not set aside a specified period of time, and instead simply call for some form of national recognition, it is not the intent of the rule that such alternative forms should become a new outlet for the consideration of such measures. Thus, while they could be referred to an appropriate committee, it is not expected that such committees should feel obligated or pressured to establish special rules for their release to the House floor. Nor should it be expected that the Rule [sic] Committee should become the new avenue for regular waivers of the rule against

---

<sup>3</sup> “Commission on National Observances and Holidays,” *Congressional Record*, vol. 113, part 6 (March 20, 1967), pp. 7258-7263.

<sup>4</sup> The proposed commission was introduced in six succeeding Congresses beginning in the 98<sup>th</sup> Congress (1983-1984). These proposals were each called the National Commemorative Events Advisory Act and were introduced as H.R. 4571 (98<sup>th</sup> Congress); H.R. 692, (99<sup>th</sup> Congress); H.R. 998 (100<sup>th</sup> Congress); H.R. 539 (101<sup>st</sup> Congress); S. 1112, H.R. 68, and H.R. 1882 (102<sup>nd</sup> Congress); H.R. 624 (103<sup>rd</sup> Congress); and S. 1236 (104<sup>th</sup> Congress). None of these proposals was reported out of committee.

<sup>5</sup> For more information on suspension of the rules procedures, see CRS Report 98-354, *How Special Rules Regulate Calling up Measures for Consideration in the House*, by Richard S. Beth.

<sup>6</sup> “Ban on Commemoratives,” *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol. 141, January 4, 1995, pp. H29-H30.

date specific commemorative [sic]. Such exceptions should be limited to those rare situations warranting special national recognition as determined by the Leadership.<sup>7</sup>

## **House Republican Caucus Rule 28**

In relation to the current operation of House Rule XII, clause 5, the House Republican Conference adopted a rule (Rule 28 (6)) that prohibits the Republican leader from scheduling “any bill or resolution for consideration under suspension of the Rules which ... expresses appreciation, commends, congratulates, celebrates, recognizes the accomplishments of, or celebrates the anniversary of, an entity, event, group, individual, institution, team or government program; or acknowledges or recognizes a period of time for such purposes....”<sup>8</sup>

Additionally, the House majority party leadership has issued protocols “intended to guide the majority leadership in the scheduling and consideration of legislation on the House floor.” Included in Protocol 7 is guidance on possible exemptions to Conference Rule 28. Protocol 7 states,

A resolution of bereavement, or condemnation, or which calls on others (such as a foreign government) to take a particular action, but which does not otherwise violate the provisions of Rule 28 is eligible to be scheduled under suspension of the Rules.<sup>9</sup>

Party conference rules and protocols, however, are not enforceable by points of order on the House floor, although they may reflect a general reluctance on the part of the majority party to schedule any legislation with commemorative intent.

## **Past Waiver of House Rule XII**

Since House Rule XII, clause 5, was adopted in the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress, it has been waived on at least one occasion. Specifically, the “House by unanimous consent waived the prohibition against introduction of a certain joint resolution specified by sponsor and title proposing a commemoration,”<sup>10</sup> to allow for the consideration of the H.J.Res. 71 (107<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2001-2002), legislation establishing Patriot Day as a day of remembrance for September 11, 2001.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> “Rules of the House,” *Congressional Record*, vol. 141, part 1 (January 4, 1995), p. 476.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Congress, House Republican Conference, “Conference Rules.” Pursuant to Rule 28(b), “a waiver of this rule can be granted by the majority of the Elected Leadership as defined under [Republican Conference] Rule 2.” The elected leadership of the Republican Conference is defined in Rule 2(a) of the Conference Rules to include the Speaker of the House, the Republican Leader, the Republican Whip, the Chair of the Republican Conference, the Chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee, the Chair of the Committee on Policy, the Vice-Chairman of the Republican Conference, and the Secretary of the Republican Conference.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Rules, “113<sup>th</sup> Congress Legislative Protocols,” at <http://rules.house.gov/113th-congress-legislative-protocols>.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Congress, House, *Constitution, Jefferson’s Manual, and Rules of the House of Representatives of the United States, One Hundred Thirteenth Congress*, prepared by Thomas J. Wickham, parliamentarian, 112<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., H.Doc. 112-161 (Washington: GPO, 2013), §823, p. 621.

<sup>11</sup> “Authorizing Introduction of Joint Resolution Designating September 11 as United We Stand Remembrance Day,” *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol. 147 (October 24, 2001), p. H.7300; and “Making in Order on Thursday, October 25, 2001, Consideration of Joint Resolution Designating September 11 as United We Stand Remembrance Day,” *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol. 147 (October 24, 2001), p. H7300.

## Overview of Options Discussed

Congress's commemorative options fall into two general categories: legislative options and non-legislative options. All legislative options require passage of a bill or resolution by the House, the Senate, or both chambers, while non-legislative options can be accomplished by individual offices without legislative approval. This report is organized according to discussion of the two options. Legislative options include naming federal buildings, designing postage stamps, minting commemorative coins, awarding congressional gold medals, creating monuments and memorials, designating commemorative observances, establishing federal holidays, and requesting presidential proclamations. Non-legislative options include creating individual office awards, giving floor speeches, sending official letters, and ordering flags.

## Legislative Options

Several legislative options exist to honor individuals, groups, and historic events. For each of these commemoratives, legislation must be passed by both the House and Senate and signed by the President. In some cases, House and Senate committees have specific rules or guidance associated with commemoratives. These include requiring a minimum number of cosponsors before the bill can be considered by the committee, prohibitions against commemorating sitting Members of Congress, and some restrictions on commemorating living persons.

## Naming Federal Buildings

In each Congress, many bills are introduced to name a post office or other federal building in honor or in memory of locally esteemed individuals, deceased elected officials, fallen military personnel, and celebrities. To name a post office or other federal building after an individual an act of Congress is required. This section details congressional involvement in the naming of post offices and other federal buildings.

### Post Offices

Legislation naming post offices for persons has become a very common practice. In recent Congresses, almost 20% of all statutes enacted were post office naming acts. Legislation has named post offices for a variety of persons, including locally esteemed individuals (e.g., Reverend Abe Brown),<sup>12</sup> deceased elected officials (e.g., Ronald Reagan),<sup>13</sup> fallen Armed Forces personnel (e.g., Army Specialist Matthew Troy Morris),<sup>14</sup> and celebrities (e.g., Bob Hope).<sup>15</sup>

Post office naming statutes commonly identify the address of the postal facility and provide for naming ("designating") it.<sup>16</sup> Renaming a post office through legislation, however, does not result

---

<sup>12</sup> P.L. 112-159, 126 Stat. 1270, August 10, 2012.

<sup>13</sup> Several post offices have been named after President Ronald Reagan. They include Dixon, IL (P.L. 111-235, 124 Stat. 2495, August 16, 2010); Billings, MT (P.L. 108-143, 117 Stat. 1877, December 2, 2003), and West Melbourne, FL (P.L. 107-7, 1159 Stat. 9, April 12, 2001).

<sup>14</sup> P.L. 112-107, 126 Stat. 328, May 15, 2012.

<sup>15</sup> P.L. 108-120, 117 Stat. 1334, November 11, 2003.

<sup>16</sup> Post office naming statutes also include a "references" provision. The practical effect of this provision is that it (continued...)

in the new name being etched or painted on the facade of the building or signs. Rather, a small plaque noting the designee and designation is installed within the post office.

Over the years, both the House and Senate have adopted policies and practices for considering and enacting post office naming bills. These policies and practices, sometimes expressed in “Dear Colleague” letters or committee rules, have varied from Congress to Congress.<sup>17</sup> Frequently, the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee has adopted a policy (though not a formal rule) that a post office naming bill would not be approved until all Members from the state where the post office is located have signed on as cosponsors of the bill. Similarly, the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee (HSGAC) adopted practices for considering and reporting post office naming legislation.<sup>18</sup> Currently, HSGAC has said it would

not consider any legislation that would name a postal facility for a living person with the exception of bills naming facilities after former Presidents and Vice Presidents of the United States, former Members of Congress over 70 years of age, former state or local elected officials over 70 years of age, former judges over 70 years of age, or wounded veterans.<sup>19</sup>

Once post office naming legislation is reported by the House and Senate Committees, the legislation, if considered on the floor, tends to pass the House under suspension of the rules and the Senate via unanimous consent.<sup>20</sup>

For more information on naming post offices, including sample legislation, see CRS Report RS21562, *Naming Post Offices Through Legislation*, by Kevin R. Kosar.

## **Other Federal Buildings**

Bills to name other federal buildings or facilities may be considered and reported in any committee, typically in relation to the agencies under each committee’s jurisdiction. Legislation naming a veterans medical facility, for example, would normally originate in the Veterans’ Affairs (VA) committees in the House and the Senate. Legislation naming courthouses—which are constructed and maintained by the General Services Administration (GSA)—is considered by the committees with jurisdiction over GSA, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee (T&I) and the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee (EPW). Historically, the large majority of non-postal facilities are named through legislation originating in these four committees: VA and T&I in the House, and VA and EPW in the Senate. Occasionally, legislation

---

(...continued)

informs agencies that they need not amend or replace existing documentation that refers to the designated post office by another name. Thus, for example, the U.S. Postal Service would not need to change its internal documents to reflect the post office’s renaming.

<sup>17</sup> For example, see U.S. Congress, House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, “The Rules of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform,” 113<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., p. 11, at <http://oversight.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/OGR-Committee-Rules-113th-Congress.pdf>.

<sup>18</sup> In recent Congresses, the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee and the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee have had jurisdiction over post office naming bills.

<sup>19</sup> John Kilvington, Staff Director, Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management, Government Information, Federal Services, & International Security, e-mails to author, February 18, 2009, and March 3, 2011; and John Kilvington, Staff Director, Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, April 19, 2013. This provision was adopted by the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee in the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress (2009-2010).

<sup>20</sup> For example, see P.L. 112-107, 126 Stat. 328, May 15, 2012.

is introduced to name buildings held by other agencies, such as National Aeronautical and Space Administration (NASA) training facilities. The principle of jurisdiction applies in these cases as well: NASA is under the jurisdiction of the Science, Space and Technology Committee in the House (SST) and the Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee in the Senate (STC), so naming legislation for NASA facilities is considered by these committees.

Committees vary as to whether they have specific rules regarding the introduction of naming legislation. Some have written naming rules. In the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress, for example, the Senate and House Veterans Affairs committees have identical language in their committee rules that identify specific criteria for naming legislation.<sup>21</sup> These rules prohibit naming a VA facility after an individual unless the individual is deceased and

- a veteran who (i) was instrumental in the construction of the facility to be named, or (ii) was a recipient of the Medal of Honor, or, as determined by the Chairman and Ranking Minority Member, otherwise performed military service of an extraordinarily distinguished character;
- a Member of the United States House of Representatives or Senate who had a direct association with such facility;
- an Administrator of Veterans' Affairs, a Secretary of Veterans' Affairs, a Secretary of Defense or of a service branch, or a military or other federal civilian official of comparable or higher rank; or
- an individual who, as determined by the Chairman and Ranking Minority Member, performed outstanding service for veterans.

In addition, each Member of the congressional delegation representing the state in which the designated facility is located must indicate, in writing, his or her support of the bill. Finally, the pertinent state department or chapter of each congressionally chartered veterans' organization with a national membership of at least 500,000 must indicate, in writing, its support of the bill.

By contrast, the committees with jurisdiction over courthouse naming in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress—T&I in the House and EPW in the Senate—do not have identical written rules. Currently, T&I does not have a formal rule pertaining to naming legislation, although it did have written policies regarding naming legislation in previous Congresses. A 1995 memorandum prepared by the staff of the House Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, Hazardous Materials and Pipeline Transportation of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, for example, identified criteria for the subcommittee to consider in naming a public building.<sup>22</sup> These criteria were as follows:

- The building must be under the control of the General Services Administration (GSA) or the Architect of the Capitol (leased buildings are normally not named unless the building is under a lease purchase authority).

---

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Veterans' Affairs, *Rules of the Committee On Veterans' Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, for the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress*, Rule 10, pp. 9-10 at <http://veterans.house.gov/sites/repUBLICANS.veterans.house.gov/files/documents/FINAL%20Committee%20Rules%20for%20113th.pdf>, and U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Veterans' Affairs, *Rules of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs for the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress*, Rule VIII.

<sup>22</sup> U.S. Congress, House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Subcommittee on Public Buildings and Economic Development, *The Naming of Public Buildings*, internal committee memorandum dated July 16, 1995.

- The building must not currently be named for an individual.
- Subcommittee consideration does not occur unless the Member in whose district the building is located sponsors the legislation or otherwise consents to the naming.
- Age requirements are not applicable.
- Priority is not given to any particular class or occupation of individuals.
- The subcommittee generally does not name buildings for sitting Members of Congress.
- The person for whom the building is named must have a “good reputation.”<sup>23</sup>

While no longer part of the committee’s written rules, some or all of these requirements may still be in place—albeit informally—and enforced. Contacting the committee is the only way to determine what informal rules are in place, if any.

EPW, on the other hand, has its requirements in committee rules.<sup>24</sup> According to Rule 7(d) the committee may not name a building for any living person, except

- a former President or Vice President of the United States;
- a former Member of Congress over 70 years of age;
- a former Supreme Court Justice over 70 years of age;
- a federal judge who is fully retired and over 75 years of age; or
- a federal judge who has taken senior status and is over 75 years of age.<sup>25</sup>

As with T&I, neither SST in the House nor STC in the Senate have written rules pertaining to naming legislation.

## **Postage Stamps**

Each year, the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) issues commemorative stamps to celebrate persons, anniversaries, and historical and cultural phenomena. For example, USPS has issued stamps for former Representative Shirley Chisholm, the Year of the Horse, and Harry Potter.<sup>26</sup> The USPS issues these stamps at its own statutory discretion and operates the program as a profit-making enterprise.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, Rules of the Committee on Environment and Public Works, United States Senate, and Standing Rules of the Senate Relative to the Activities of Committees, 113<sup>th</sup> Congress, Rule 7(d), at <http://www.epw.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=CommitteeResources.CommitteeRules>.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> U.S. Postal Service, “Shop USPS,” at [https://store.usps.com/store/browse/subcategory.jsp?categoryId=subcatS\\_S\\_NewStamps&categoryNavIds=catBuyStamps%3AsubcatS\\_S\\_NewStamps](https://store.usps.com/store/browse/subcategory.jsp?categoryId=subcatS_S_NewStamps&categoryNavIds=catBuyStamps%3AsubcatS_S_NewStamps).

<sup>27</sup> 39 U.S.C. §404(a) (4-5); and CRS Report RS20221, *Commemorative Postage Stamps: History, Selection Criteria, and Revenue Potential*, by Kevin R. Kosar. USPS profits when commemorative stamp buyers save, rather than use, the stamps.

Legislation to direct USPS to issue a stamp to commemorate persons, historical occurrences, and groups is occasionally introduced. CRS, however, has been unable to identify any instances of such legislation being enacted into law.

The House committee of jurisdiction (Committee on Oversight and Government Reform) has a rule against considering legislation that proposes the issuance of commemorative stamps. Committee Rule 13 states: “The determination of the subject matter of commemorative stamps is properly for consideration by the Postmaster General.”<sup>28</sup>

For more information on commemorative postage stamps, see CRS Report RS22611, *Common Questions About Postage and Stamps*, by Kevin R. Kosar.

## Commemorative Coins

The guidelines for consideration of legislation authorizing commemorative coins, most of which have been established in the 1990s, were developed in response to a perceived need to limit the number of commemorative coin programs authorized annually, and to ensure the financial integrity of the program.

### Advisory Coin Committee

In 1992, Congress created a seven-member Citizens Commemorative Coin Advisory Committee (CCCAC) “to advise the Secretary of the Treasury and Congress on the selection of subjects and designs for commemorative coins.” The CCCAC was specifically charged with

- designating “annually the events, persons, or places that the Advisory Committee recommends should be commemorated by the issuance of commemorative coins in each of 5 calendar years succeeding the year in which such designation is made ‘making’ recommendations with respect to the minting level for any commemorative coin recommended”; and
- submitting “a report to Congress containing a description of events, persons, or places which the Committee recommends be commemorated by coin, the minting level recommended for any such commemorative coin, and the committee’s reasons for such recommendations.”<sup>29</sup>

In its *First Annual Report to Congress* in November 1994, the CCCAC concluded that, “[g]iven the current state of the commemorative market,” the committee’s “first priority must be to restrain the proliferation of commemorative coin programs,” while at the same time developing a program that reflects the “noblest values and achievements of the nation.”<sup>30</sup> The following themes were considered inappropriate for commemoration: (1) state or regional anniversaries with little or no national significance; (2) local institutions such as governments, universities, and public and

---

<sup>28</sup> U.S. Congress, House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, “The Rules of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform,” 113<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., p. 11, at <http://oversight.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/OGR-Committee-Rules-113th-Congress.pdf>.

<sup>29</sup> P.L. 102-390, §229, 106 Stat. 1632, October 6, 1992.

<sup>30</sup> Citizens Commemorative Coin Advisory Committee, *First Annual Report to Congress*, November 1994, pp. 1,4.

private schools; (3) commercial enterprises and products; and (4) organizations, individuals, and themes principally sectarian in nature.

### **1993 Sense of the Congress Resolution**

In the 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress (1993-1994), 14 months after Congress created the Citizens Commemorative Coin Advisory Committee, it declared in a “Sense of Congress,”<sup>31</sup> that the Senate and House Banking Committees “should not report or otherwise clear for consideration ... more than two commemorative coin programs for any year, unless the committee determines, on the basis of a recommendation by the Citizens Commemorative Coin Advisory Committee, that extraordinary merit exists for an additional commemorative coin program.” It was in the “interests of all Members of Congress,” the resolution found, “that a policy be established to control the flow of commemorative coin legislation” which had “increased at a pace beyond that which the numismatic community can reasonably be expected to absorb.”<sup>32</sup>

### **1996 Statutory Restrictions**

In 1996, additional clarifications were made in the commemorative coin program. These adjustments

- placed restrictions on the number of new commemorative coin programs (two each calendar year beginning January 1, 1999) and on annual mintage levels of such programs;
- required that all surcharges from numismatic operations be deposited in the Mint’s Numismatic Public Enterprise Fund;
- stipulated that surcharge payments are not made to the recipient organizations until (1) all operation and program costs have been recovered, and (2) the designated organization has submitted an audited financial statement that demonstrates it has raised funds from private sources that are “equal to or greater than the maximum amount the organization may receive from the proceeds” of the surcharge;
- mandated an annual audit of recipient organizations; and
- prohibited proceeds of any surcharge from being used to influence coin legislation.<sup>33</sup>

### **Abolition of the Citizens Commemorative Coin Advisory Committee (CCCAC)**

In 2003, Congress eliminated the CCCAC and established the Citizens Coinage Advisory Committee (CCAC) to advise the Secretary of the Treasury on the selection of themes and designs for coins. While broadly similar to the CCCAC in organization, the CCAC role is

---

<sup>31</sup> P.L. 103-186, §301(b), 107 Stat. 2251, December 14, 1993.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, §301(a).

<sup>33</sup> P.L. 104-208, 110 Stat. 3009-349-3009-351.

narrower in that it is removed from advising (unless consulted) Congress on themes and designs of commemorative coins prior to the enactment of commemorative coin legislation.<sup>34</sup>

### **Committee Rules/Practice**

Rule 3(f)(1)(A) of the House Committee on Banking and Financial Services prohibits its Subcommittee on Domestic and International Monetary Policy from: (1) scheduling a hearing on commemorative coin legislation unless it is “cosponsored by at least two-thirds of the Members of the House,” or (2) reporting a “bill or measure authorizing commemorative coins which does not conform with the minting regulations under 31 U.S.C. § 5112.”<sup>35</sup>

The Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee rules require that a commemorative coin bill or resolution have at least 67 Senators as cosponsors before the committee will consider it.<sup>36</sup>

### **Outside Advice Sought by Committees**

When considering commemorative coin legislation, both the House and Senate banking committees often seek advice from several different sources, but doing so is not required. Among the groups normally contacted are the Citizens Commemorative Coin Advisory Committee, the American Numismatic Association, editors of numismatic publications, the head of the Smithsonian Institution’s numismatic division, renowned metallic sculptors, and numismatic artists (previous winners of design competitions).

### **Congressional Gold Medals**

Although Congress has approved legislation stipulating requirements for numerous other awards and decorations,<sup>37</sup> there are no permanent statutory provisions specifically relating to the creation of Congressional Gold Medals. When a Congressional Gold Medal has been deemed appropriate, Congress has, by legislative action, provided for the creation of a medal on an *ad hoc* basis.

In the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress, Rule 3(f)(1)(A) of the House Committee on Financial Services stipulates that the Subcommittee on Domestic Monetary Policy and Technology will not hold a hearing on Congressional Gold Medal legislation unless it is cosponsored by at least two-thirds (290) of the Members of the House. Rule 3(f)(1)(C) requires the subcommittee to apply the following standards in considering legislation authorizing Congressional Gold Medals:

- the recipient shall be a natural person;

---

<sup>34</sup> P.L. 108-15, §103, 117 Stat. 616, April 23, 2003.

<sup>35</sup> U.S. Congress, House, Rules of the Committee on Financial Services, February 2013, at <http://financialservices.house.gov/about/rules.htm>.

<sup>36</sup> “Rules of Procedure of the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs,” *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol. 159 (February 26, 2013), p. S5859.

<sup>37</sup> See “Decorations, Medals, and Badges,” in the general index of the *United States Code: 2000 Edition* (Washington: GPO, 2001).

- the recipient shall have performed an achievement that has an impact on American history and culture that is likely to be recognized as a major achievement in the recipient's field long after the achievement;
- the recipient shall not have received a medal previously for the same or substantially the same achievement;
- the recipient shall be living or, if deceased, shall have been deceased for not less than 5 years and not more than 25 years; and
- the achievements were performed in the recipient's field of endeavor, and represent either a lifetime of continuous superior achievements or a single achievement so significant that the recipient is recognized and acclaimed by others in the same field, as evidenced by the recipient having received the highest honors in the field.<sup>38</sup>

Similarly, the Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee, in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress, requires that at least 67 Senators cosponsor any Congressional Gold Medal bill before the committee will consider it.<sup>39</sup>

The rules of the House Republican Conference also place an indirect restriction on the number of gold medals that may be awarded annually. Rule 28(a)(7) prohibits the Republican leader from scheduling, or requesting to have scheduled, any bill for consideration under suspension of the rules which “directs the Secretary of the Treasury to strike an additional Congressional Gold Medal in a particular calendar year if the Secretary has already been directed to strike 2 medals in such year.”<sup>40</sup> A waiver on the restriction can be granted by the majority of the elected leadership of the conference.<sup>41</sup> In addition, because the restriction only applies to bills considered under suspension of the rules, it appears that an otherwise-prohibited bill could be brought to the floor under an alternative procedure, such as a special rule.<sup>42</sup>

For more information on Congressional Gold Medals, see CRS Report RL30076, *Congressional Gold Medals, 1776-2014*, by Matthew E. Glassman.

## Monuments and Memorials

On many occasions, Congress has authorized the creation of monuments and memorials to commemorate historic figures, events, and movements. Whether the monument or memorial is intended to be built in the District of Columbia determines the process for placement, design, and approval of the commemorative work.

---

<sup>38</sup> “Publication of Committee Rules,” *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol. 159 (February 15, 2013), p. H580.

<sup>39</sup> “Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Rules of Procedure,” *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol. 159 (February 26, 2013), pp. S859.

<sup>40</sup> Rule 28(a)(7), *Rules of the House Republican Conference for the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress*, available at <http://www.gop.gov/about/rules?rules-home>.

<sup>41</sup> For a list of elected leadership, see footnote 8.

<sup>42</sup> Special rules may waive all or certain points of order against consideration of a bill. For more information, see CRS Report 98-612, *Special Rules and Options for Regulating the Amending Process*, by Megan S. Lynch.

## District of Columbia

In 1986, the Commemorative Works Act (CWA) was enacted to provide standards for the consideration and placement of monuments and memorials in areas administered by the National Park Service (NPS) and the General Services Administration (GSA) in the District of Columbia.<sup>43</sup> The CWA provides that no “commemorative work may be established in the District of Columbia unless specifically authorized by Congress.”<sup>44</sup>

Legislation proposing a new commemorative work in the District of Columbia generally consists of three main sections: a short title, definitions, and authorization for establishing the memorial. First, most authorizing legislation has a short title. This is the name of the authorizing legislation, which often includes the name of the memorial. Second, the definitions section contains terms used in further sections of the legislation. These can include “memorial,” “association,” “foundation,” or other relevant terms. Finally, the authorization generally consists of four parts:

1. Authorization to establish a commemorative work. This designates a specific third party entity as the “sponsor group,” which is the party responsible for the establishment of the new monument or memorial.
2. Compliance with the Commemorative Works Act. This applies the CWA to the monument or memorial or exempts the monument and memorial from the CWA or certain CWA provisions.
3. Prohibition of Federal Funds. This section generally prohibits the designated sponsor group from using federal funds on the monument or memorial.
4. Deposit of excess funds. This provision specifies the use of funds raised by the sponsor group in excess of those necessary for the design, construction, and dedication of the monument or memorial.

Following introduction, CWA related legislation is generally referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources and the Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Policy, and the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. Either one or both of the committees (or subcommittees) will hold hearings on the proposal, inviting testimony from representatives of the National Park Service and the organization seeking approval for the monument or memorial. Important considerations will include historical importance of the commemorative work, estimated cost, and how private funds needed for construction are to be raised. Additionally, the National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission will often provide advice to the committees on the proposed memorial.<sup>45</sup>

For more information on the process after a commemorative work is authorized by Congress, see CRS Report R41658, *Commemorative Works in the District of Columbia: Background and*

---

<sup>43</sup> 40 U.S.C. §§8901-8909.

<sup>44</sup> 40 U.S.C. §8902(a)(2). “The term “the District of Columbia and its environs” means those lands and properties administered by the National Park Service and the General Services Administration located in the Reserve, Area I, and Area II as depicted on the map entitled “Commemorative Areas Washington, DC and Environs”, numbered 869/86501 B, and dated June 24, 2003.” For a map of the commemorative areas of Washington, DC and environs, see CRS Report R41658, *Commemorative Works in the District of Columbia: Background and Practice*, by Jacob R. Straus. Memorials to be located on land under the Jurisdiction of the District of Columbia are governed by D.C. Law 13-275, the Commemorative Works on Public Space Amendment Act of 2000.

<sup>45</sup> 40 U.S.C. §8904.

*Practice*, by Jacob R. Straus. For a list of commemorative works authorized since the enactment of the CWA in 1986, see CRS Report R42128, *Monuments and Memorials Authorized Under the Commemorative Works Act in the District of Columbia: Background and Current Developments*, by Jacob R. Straus.

## **Non-District of Columbia**

Congressional involvement in monuments and memorials outside of the District of Columbia is not governed by the Commemorative Works Act. Instead, the process for creating the monument or memorial is determined based on whether the work will be placed on existing federal land. Recently, Congress has handled the creation of monuments and memorials outside the District of Columbia in two ways: by directly authorizing a new commemorative or by making an existing commemorative a “national” monument or memorial.<sup>46</sup>

### *New Commemorative*

Periodically, Congress authorizes a new memorial outside of the District of Columbia. On these occasions, legislation is required to statutorily authorize a group—either federal or non-federal—to design, construct, and maintain the memorial.

For example, during the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress (2001-2002), legislation was enacted to authorize a memorial at the crash site in Shanksville, PA,<sup>47</sup> for “a national memorial to commemorate the passengers and crew of Flight 93 who, on September 11, 2001, courageously gave their lives thereby thwarting a planned attack on our Nation’s Capital.”<sup>48</sup> During debate on the bill (H.R. 3917), Representative William Shuster summarized the importance of Congress creating a national memorial and making it part of the National Park Service.

As we debate this measure, in this most revered of halls, I cannot help but contemplate the possibility that Flight 93 was headed to a target here in the Nation’s Capitol—quite possibly right here to the Capitol itself. We will, however, never know for sure where that doomed flight was headed. We will never know, because men and women, put love of country ahead of self preservation. These were not super heros [sic], but individuals just like you and me. Individuals with families and loved ones anxiously awaiting their return, who put aside their own desires [sic] and stood up to combat terrorism and save countless lives....

The legislation before us today lays out a fair and balanced approach for construction of a memorial for these brave individuals. The legislation calls for the creation of the Flight 93 Advisory Commission which would be composed of representatives from the families of victims, the local community, the state of Pennsylvania and the United States Government. The Commission would then submit their recommendations to the Secretary of the Interior.<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> Pursuant to the Antiquities Act of 1909 (16 U.S.C. §§431-433), the president may establish national monuments on federal lands. National monuments generally contain “historic landmarks, historic and prehistoric structures, and other objects of historic or scientific interest.” (16 U.S.C. §3213). For more information on national monuments and the Antiquities Act of 1909, see CRS Report R41330, *National Monuments and the Antiquities Act*, by Carol Hardy Vincent and Kristina Alexander.

<sup>47</sup> P.L. 107-226, 116 Stat. 1345, September 24, 2002; 16 U.S.C. §431 note.

<sup>48</sup> U.S. Congress, House Committee on Resources, *Flight 93 National Memorial Act*, report to accompany H.R. 3917, 107<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> session, July 22, 2002, H.Rept. 107-597 (Washington: GPO, 2002).

<sup>49</sup> Rep. William Shuster, “Flight 93 National Memorial Act,” remarks in the House, *Congressional Record*, daily (continued...)

In authorizing the Flight 93 Memorial, Congress also created an advisory committee to make recommendations to the Secretary of the Interior and Congress on the design, construction, and management of the memorial.<sup>50</sup> Creation of such a commission is not uncommon and can aid government agencies with the planning and execution of commemorations.

### ***Official Recognition of Commemoratives***

Instead of authorizing the creation of a completely new memorial, Congress has also considered legislation to recognize existing works as national monuments or memorials. Enacting legislation to provide national recognition of a monument or memorial, but maintaining local operation and maintenance, generally requires no federal oversight or funds. For example, in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress, H.R. 330 would designate a memorial in Riverside, CA, as the “Distinguished Flying Cross National Memorial.”<sup>51</sup> The memorial honors military aviators who have received the “Distinguished Flying Cross [which] is the oldest military award for aviation ...” with a national memorial, which does not already exist.<sup>52</sup>

### **Commemorative Commissions**

Commemorative commissions are entities established to oversee the commemoration of a person or event. These commissions typically coordinate celebrations, scholarly events, public gatherings, and other activities, often to coincide with a milestone anniversary. For example, the Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee Commission was created “to prepare a comprehensive program for commemorating the quincentennial of the voyages of discovery of Christopher Columbus, and to plan, encourage, coordinate, and conduct observances and activities commemorating the historic events associated with those voyages.”<sup>53</sup>

Bills creating commemorative commissions are introduced regularly in Congress. For example, in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress (2011-2013), more than a dozen bills were introduced to establish commemorative commissions. Similar numbers of bills have been proposed in previous Congresses. Most of these bills, however, are not enacted.

A statute establishing a commemorative commission generally includes the commission’s mandate, provides a membership and appointment structure, outlines the commission’s duties and powers, and sets a termination date. A variety of options are available for each of these organizational choices, and legislators can tailor the composition, organization, and working arrangements of a commission, based on the particular goals of Congress. As a result, the organizational structure and powers of individual commissions are often unique.

---

(...continued)

edition, vol. 148 (July 22, 2002), p. H5005.

<sup>50</sup> P.L. 107-226, §. 4.

<sup>51</sup> H.R. 330, §2(b) (113<sup>th</sup> Congress), passed the House of Representatives October 29, 2013.

<sup>52</sup> Rep. Raúl Grijalva, “Distinguished Flying Cross National Memorial Act,” remarks in the House, *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol. 159 (October 29, 2013), p. H6853. See also, U.S. Congress, House Committee on Natural Resources, *Distinguished Flying Cross National Memorial Act*, report to accompany H.R. 330, 113<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., May 17, 2013, H.Rept. 113-79 (Washington: GPO, 2013), p. 1.

<sup>53</sup> P.L. 98-375, 98 Stat. 1257, August 7, 1984.

In fulfilling their duties, most commemorative commissions have encouraged, worked closely with, and provided coordination for private groups, state and local governments, and other federal government entities taking part in the general commemoration of the person or event. Because of these cooperative efforts, federally created commissions are often only a portion of planned celebratory events. Therefore, federal funds appropriated to a commemorative commission are generally only a portion of the total funding ultimately expended nationwide for commemorative activities and events.

Commemorative commissions have been funded in two ways: through appropriations or through solicitation of nonfederal money. At times, commissions are authorized both for appropriations and to fundraise or accept donations. In addition, some commemorative commissions are not provided with explicit authorization to solicit funds or accept donations. Commissions without the statutory authority to solicit funds or accept donations are generally prohibited from engaging in those activities.<sup>54</sup>

For more information on commemorative commissions, see CRS Report R41425, *Commemorative Commissions: Overview, Structure, and Funding*, by Matthew E. Glassman and Jacob R. Straus.

## Commemorative Observances and Days

As discussed in “House Ban on Commemorative Legislation,” House Rule XII, clause 5 prohibits the introduction or consideration of commemorative legislation that includes a “remembrance, celebration or recognition for any purpose through the designation of a specified period of time.”<sup>55</sup> Consequently, the number of commemorative observances and days designated by bills, concurrent resolutions, joint resolutions, and House resolutions is small. The House prohibition on commemorative observances and days, however, does not preclude the Senate from using Senate measures to honor individuals, groups, and events.

In the past, the Senate Judiciary Committee has had unpublished guidelines on the consideration of commemorative legislation. These guidelines were not officially part of the committee’s rules and may not be currently applicable. Past guidance restricted consideration of commemorative legislation without a minimum number of bipartisan cosponsors and prohibited commemoration of

- a commercial enterprise, industry, or specific product, or a fraternal, political, business, labor, or sectarian organization;
- a particular state or any political subdivision of a state, city, town, county, school, or institution of higher learning; or
- a living person.<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>54</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Principles of Federal Appropriations Law: Third Edition, Volume II*, GAO-06-382SP, February 2006, pp. 6-162, <http://www.gao.gov/special.pubs/d06382sp.pdf>.

<sup>55</sup> U.S. Congress, House, “Rule XII, clause 5,” *Constitution, Jefferson’s Manual and Rules of the House of Representatives of the United States One Hundred Twelfth Congress*, 111<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., H.Doc. 111-157 (Washington: GPO, 2011), §823, p. 616-617.

<sup>56</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on the Judiciary, “Committee Policy for the Consideration of Commemorative Measures: 106<sup>th</sup> Congress (unpublished).

## Federal Holidays

The United States has established 11 permanent federal holidays. They are, in the order they appear in the calendar: New Year’s Day, Martin Luther King Jr.’s Birthday, Inauguration Day (every four years following a presidential election), George Washington’s Birthday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day.<sup>57</sup> Although frequently called public or national days, these celebrations are only legally applicable to federal employees and the District of Columbia, as the states individually decide their own legal holidays.

To create a new federal holiday, legislation is required. In recent Congresses, legislation has been introduced to create holidays such as “Cesar E. Chavez Day,”<sup>58</sup> or to formally establish Election Day as such.<sup>59</sup> Recent legislation to create a new federal holiday has suggested adding the day to the list of holidays at 5 U.S.C. Section 6103.

For more information on federal holidays, see CRS Report R41990, *Federal Holidays: Evolution and Current Practices*, by Jacob R. Straus.

## Presidential Proclamations

On many occasions, Congress has requested that the President issue a proclamation recognizing an event or individual. Usually associated with the creation of a patriotic and national observance, statutory language requests that the President issue a proclamation each year to commemorate an event or group. For example, the National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day statute requests that the president issue a yearly proclamation “calling on ... the people of the United States to observe National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day with appropriate ceremonies and activities...”<sup>60</sup>

Commemorative proclamations can also be issued by Presidents without any congressional action, and have been regularly issued throughout American history. Since 1789, when President George Washington issued the first proclamation declaring November 26 of that year a National Day of Thanksgiving, there have been hundreds of such designations.

## Non-Legislative Options

In addition to the legislative options for commemoration listed above, several non-legislative options exist to commemorate individuals, groups, and events. These include certificates of recognition, floor speeches, and the purchasing of American flags.

---

<sup>57</sup> 5 U.S.C. §6103(a).

<sup>58</sup> For example, see H.Res. 130 (112<sup>th</sup> Congress); H.Res. 1524 (111<sup>th</sup> Congress); H.Res. 105 (107<sup>th</sup> Congress); and H.J.Res. 356 (103<sup>rd</sup> Congress). Each measure was referred to the committee of jurisdiction and did not receive further attention in the House.

<sup>59</sup> For examples, see H.R. 62 (107<sup>th</sup> Congress), which would have amended Title 5, *United States Code*, “to establish election day in Presidential election years as a legal public holiday....”

<sup>60</sup> 36 U.S.C. §129 (b). For example, President Barack Obama issued a National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day Proclamation on December 5, 2013. For text of the proclamation, see The White House, “Presidential Proclamation—National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, 2013,” press release, December 5, 2013, at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/12/05/presidential-proclamation-national-pearl-harbor-remembrance-day-2013>.

## Certificates of Recognition

Certificates of Recognition are “awards” given by individual Member offices to constituents or groups to acknowledge accomplishments. Members are generally free to create and distribute certificates of recognition to individuals or groups to constituents.

In the House, official funds can be used for the creation and distribution of certificates “in connection with official and representational duties,”<sup>61</sup> provided that the certificates comply with Franking Regulations and do not contain political or partisan references, solicit support of a Member’s position on an issue, or advertise or endorse benefits not available to all constituents.<sup>62</sup> Additionally, the House Ethics Manual reminds Members that all constituents are to be treated equally, regardless of “political support, party affiliation, or campaign contributions ...” when deciding to provide assistance to constituents.<sup>63</sup> This would likely extend to the sending of certificates of recognition as well.<sup>64</sup>

In the Senate, the *Standing Orders of the Senate* place restrictions on reimbursable expenses payable from a Senator’s Official Office Account. S.Res. 294 (96<sup>th</sup> Congress) and S.Res. 176 (104<sup>th</sup> Congress) specifically prohibit the use of official funds for “expenses incurred for the purchase of holiday greeting cards, flowers, trophies, awards, and *certificates*” (emphasis added).<sup>65</sup> Further, pursuant to 39 U.S.C. Section 3210(a)(3)(F), the Senate Ethics Manual provides guidance that “[m]ail expressing congratulations to a person who achieved some public distinction may be franked only when the occasion involves a public distinction, rather than a personal distinction.”<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>61</sup> U.S. Congress, Committee on House Administration, “Certificates,” *Members’ Congressional Handbook*, 113<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., December 16, 2011, at <http://cha.house.gov/handbooks/members-congressional-handbook#Members-Handbook-Office-Expenses-Certificates>.

<sup>62</sup> U.S. Congress, House Commission on Congressional Mailing Standards, *Regulations on the Use of the Congressional Frank by Members of the House of Representatives*, pp. 7-9.

<sup>63</sup> U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, *House Ethics Manual*, 110<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess. (Washington: GPO, 2008), p. 308. See also, CRS Report RS22771, *Congressional Franking Privilege: Background and Recent Legislation*, by Matthew E. Glassman.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160. The House Ethics Manual notes, however, that “while letters of congratulations for a public distinction are frankable, other letters of congratulation, such as for years of service at a business, or retirement, are not. Under House rules, a Member may use campaign funds and resources to create and send cards, letters, and certificates of these types to constituents. However, such materials may not be produced in or sent from any House office, and may not be produced or sent using any other House resource, including office equipment or staff while on official time.”

<sup>65</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on Rules and Administration, “Standing Orders of the Senate: Restrictions on Certain Expenses Payable or Reimbursable from a Senator’s Official Office Expense Account,” *Senate Manual*, 110<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., S.Doc. 110-1 (Washington: GPO, 2008), §107(2)(2), p. 107; and U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on Rules and Administration, *Senate Handbook* 111<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., (October 2010), p. I-46; IV-11.

<sup>66</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate Select Committee on Ethics, *Senate Ethics Manual*, 108<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., S. Pub. 108-1 (Washington: GPO, 2003), p. 164. Examples of public distinctions include recent naturalization as an American citizen; receipt of a high school diploma by a senior citizen through an adult education program; enlistment or re-enlistment in the Armed Forces; becoming an Eagle Scout or a VFW Commander or an American Legion State Commander; being elected to a public office; becoming director of a state museum; being commissioned upon graduation from one of the U.S. Service Academies; being the recipient of a Harry S. Truman Scholarship or a Robert Byrd honor scholarship; or receiving the “Employer of the Year” Award presented by the President’s Committee on Employment of the Handicapped.

## Floor Speeches

Many Members have honored individuals and groups of constituents by giving a floor speech, and then sending copies of the *Congressional Record* to the individual or group that was honored. This activity can include a single Member or a group of Members that want to jointly honor constituent(s) either with a group of special order speeches or a series of individual—perhaps one minute—speeches.<sup>67</sup> To inquire about floor time for a commemorative speech, Members may contact their party's leadership.

## Flags

In 1937, a Member of Congress made the first request to fly a flag over the United States Capitol building. Since that time, the Architect of the Capitol (AOC) has managed the flag program for the House and Senate.

Generally, flags flown over the Capitol can be purchased by a constituent through his or her Representative's or Senator's offices. In both the House and Senate, the Member office collects flag requests from constituents and facilitates the purchase of flags from the House or Senate office supply store and coordinates with the Architect of the Capitol for the flying of flags over the Capitol building.

For more information on the Architect of the Capitol's flag program, see <http://www.aoc.gov/trades-and-areas-practice/capitol-flag-program>.

## House of Representatives

Members may obtain flags from the Office Supply Service (OSS). "Initially, the costs of the flags will be charged to the [Member Representational Allowance] MRA. "Once payment for a flag is received by the Member office, the office may submit the check to OSS. OSS will credit the MRA. If a request is made to have a U.S. flag flown over the Capitol, an additional flag flying fee must be paid by the individual purchasing the flag."<sup>68</sup> Additionally, Members may use official funds to pay for a flag flown over the Capitol that will be used for an official gift.<sup>69</sup>

For more information on the House of Representative flag program, see <https://housenet.house.gov/serving-constituents/flags>.

## Senate

Senators may obtain flags from the Senate Stationary Room. Senators collect the cost of the flag, shipping fees, and flag flying and certification fees from the constituent, obtain the flag from the

---

<sup>67</sup> For an example of an honorific speech, see <http://www.congress.gov/cgi-lis/query/z?r113:H05FE4-0005:>.

<sup>68</sup> U.S. Congress, Committee on House Administration, "Flags," *Members' Congressional Handbook*, 113<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., December 16, 2011, at <http://cha.house.gov/handbooks/members-congressional-handbook#Members-Handbook-Office-Expenses-Flags>. For more information on the Member Representational Allowance (MRA), see CRS Report R40962, *Members' Representational Allowance: History and Usage*, by Ida A. Brudnick.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, at <http://cha.house.gov/handbooks/members-congressional-handbook#Members-Handbook-Office-Expenses-Gifts>.

stationary room, and then work with the Packaging and Flags division of the Printing, Graphics, and Direct Mail (PG&DM) office to arrange for the flag to be flown over the Capitol.<sup>70</sup> Additionally, pursuant to S.Res. 294 (96<sup>th</sup> Congress), “Senate offices can use official funds to purchase flags. The legislation limits the groups to which a gift of a flag may be made to public organizations only, such as churches, schools, and patriotic service groups.”<sup>71</sup>

For more information on the Senate flag program, see <http://webster.senate.gov/pdgm/flag-packaging-services>.

## Conclusion

Commemorative legislation enacted by Congress is an integral part of the American political tradition. This category of enactments has included recommendations for presidential proclamations, commemorative observances, Congressional Gold Medals and commemorative coins, monuments and memorials, and the naming of federal buildings and other structures.

## Author Contact Information

Jacob R. Straus, Coordinator  
Analyst on the Congress  
[jstraus@crs.loc.gov](mailto:jstraus@crs.loc.gov), 7-6438

Craig K. Elwell  
Specialist in Macroeconomic Policy  
[celwell@crs.loc.gov](mailto:celwell@crs.loc.gov), 7-7757

Matthew E. Glassman  
Analyst on the Congress  
[mglassman@crs.loc.gov](mailto:mglassman@crs.loc.gov), 7-3467

Garrett Hatch  
Specialist in American National Government  
[ghatch@crs.loc.gov](mailto:ghatch@crs.loc.gov), 7-7822

Valerie Heitshusen  
Analyst on Congress and the Legislative Process  
[vheitshusen@crs.loc.gov](mailto:vheitshusen@crs.loc.gov), 7-8635

Kevin R. Kosar  
Analyst in American National Government  
[kkosar@crs.loc.gov](mailto:kkosar@crs.loc.gov), 7-3968

## Key Policy Staff

Area of Expertise	Name	Phone	E-mail
Monuments and memorials Commemorative commissions	Jacob R. Straus	7-6438	<a href="mailto:jstraus@crs.loc.gov">jstraus@crs.loc.gov</a>

<sup>70</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Rules and Administration, *Senate Handbook*, 111<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., October 2010, pp. I-42-I-43.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. I-44. S.Res. 294 (96<sup>th</sup> Congress) was amended by S.Res. 176 (104<sup>th</sup> Congress). Further, “the legislative history of S.Res. 294 limits the groups to which a gift of a flag may be made to public organizations only, such as churches, schools, and patriotic service groups.” For more information see, U.S. Congress, Senate, Select Committee on Ethics, *Senate Ethics Manual*. 108<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., S.Pub. 108-1 (2003), p. 173, at [http://www.ethics.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/files/serve?File\\_id=f2eb14e3-1123-48eb-9334-8c4717102a6e](http://www.ethics.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/files/serve?File_id=f2eb14e3-1123-48eb-9334-8c4717102a6e).

---

<b>Area of Expertise</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Phone</b>	<b>E-mail</b>
Commemorative observances Federal holidays Certificates of recognition Floor speeches Flags			
Commemorative coins	Craig Elwell	7-7757	celwell@crs.loc.gov
Congressional Gold Medals Commemorative commissions	Matthew E. Glassman	7-3467	mglassman@crs.loc.gov
Naming federal buildings	Garrett Hatch	7-7822	ghatch@crs.loc.gov
House and Senate rules Floor procedure	Valerie Heitshusen	7-8635	vheitshusen@crs.loc.gov
Naming post offices Postage stamps	Kevin R. Kosar	7-3968	kkosar@crs.loc.gov

---