

114TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 2924

To award a Congressional Gold Medal to former United States Senator
Max Cleland.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 12, 2016

Mr. REID (for himself, Mr. ISAKSON, Mr. PERDUE, and Mr. DURBIN) 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 former United
States Senator Max Cleland.

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 “Max Cleland Congres-

5 sional Gold Medal Act of 2016”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

8 (1) Joseph Maxwell “Max” Cleland has dem-

9 onstrated the highest degree of professionalism and

10 has served as an inspiration to friends, family, vet-

1 erans, and many others while dedicating his life to
2 the public service of the United States.

3 (2) Max Cleland began his career in public serv-
4 ice when he joined the Reserve Officers' Training
5 Corps as a young college student, went on active
6 duty in the United States Army (in this section re-
7 ferred to as the "Army") in 1965 as a Second Lieu-
8 tenant, and volunteered for service in Vietnam, ris-
9 ing to the rank of Captain.

10 (3) The Army recognized Max Cleland with a
11 Silver Star for his gallantry in action during the
12 Battle of Khe Sanh in April of 1968. According to
13 the letter of commendation from the Army, "The
14 President of the United States of America, author-
15 ized by Act of Congress, July 8, 1918 (amended by
16 act of July 25, 1963), takes pleasure in presenting
17 the Silver Star to Captain (Signal Corps) Joseph
18 Maxwell Cleland, United States Army, for gallantry
19 in action while engaged in military operations involv-
20 ing conflict with an armed hostile force in the Re-
21 public of Vietnam."

22 (4) Max Cleland, a Battalion Signal Officer dis-
23 patched to set up a radio relay antenna, was severely
24 wounded on the battlefield and, as a result, lost both
25 of his legs and his right arm. Cleland would endure

1 18 months of extremely difficult rehabilitation and
2 recovery at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and
3 hospitals of the Department of Veterans Affairs (in
4 this section referred to as “VA hospitals”) in Wash-
5 ington, DC. In 1969, Cleland testified before the
6 Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs on the hard-
7 ships faced by veterans returning home from war.

8 (5) Upon returning to Georgia, Max Cleland
9 was determined to continue his public service and, in
10 1970, at the age of 28, was elected as the youngest
11 Georgia State senator and helped pass legislation to
12 make public facilities accessible for veterans, older
13 people, and individuals with disabilities.

14 (6) Max Cleland later came to Washington, DC,
15 and joined the Senate Committee on Veterans’ Af-
16 fairs as a professional staff member, investigating
17 VA hospitals across the country and the treatment
18 of servicemembers returning from Vietnam.

19 (7) In 1977, President Jimmy Carter named
20 Max Cleland, then just 34 years old, the youngest
21 ever individual, and first Vietnam veteran, to serve
22 as Administrator of the Veterans’ Administration.
23 As Administrator, Cleland helped create the “Vet
24 Center” counseling program, which later expanded
25 to 300 facilities nationwide helping veterans and

1 their families receive psychological care for post-
2 traumatic stress disorders and other problems asso-
3 ciated with warfare.

4 (8) Following his term as Administrator of the
5 Veterans' Administration, Max Cleland returned to
6 elective office in 1982 when he was elected as Sec-
7 retary of State of the State of Georgia. As Secretary
8 of State, Cleland implemented the National Voter
9 Registration Act of 1993 (52 U.S.C. 20501 et seq.)
10 in Georgia and added almost 1,000,000 new voters
11 to the rolls.

12 (9) Max Cleland was elected to the United
13 States Senate in 1996 and would go on to chair the
14 Subcommittee on Personnel of the Committee on
15 Armed Services of the Senate. In the Senate,
16 Cleland was known for his work in expanding bene-
17 fits for servicemembers and in improving veterans'
18 health care, education, and the environment.

19 (10) After his service in the Senate, Max
20 Cleland continued his distinguished career in public
21 service by becoming a commissioner on the National
22 Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United
23 States (commonly referred to as the "9/11 Commis-
24 sion") and later as a member of the Board of Direc-

1 tors of the Export-Import Bank of the United
2 States.

3 (11) In 2009, President Barack Obama named
4 Max Cleland Secretary of the American Battle
5 Monuments Commission. As Secretary of the Com-
6 mission, Cleland is charged with commemorating
7 both the permanent cemeteries of the United States
8 located in foreign countries and the military memo-
9 rials, monuments, and markers demonstrating where
10 members of the United States Armed Forces have
11 served overseas since World War I.

12 (12) In 2010, President Obama again called on
13 Max Cleland to serve his country and Cleland again
14 accepted. This time, Cleland agreed to serve as co-
15 chair, and eventually the inaugural chair, of the Ad-
16 visory Committee on Arlington National Cemetery,
17 which was established to help fix the problems facing
18 the final resting place for many of the heroes of the
19 United States. After his tenure as chair, Cleland was
20 awarded the Decoration for Distinguished Civilian
21 Service of the Army, the highest honorary award
22 that the Secretary of the Army can confer on a civil-
23 ian.

24 (13) After overcoming some of the most dif-
25 ficult challenges imaginable, Max Cleland has spent

1 almost five decades of his life in service to the
2 United States and the country is forever indebted to
3 his service.

4 **SEC. 3. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

5 (a) AWARD AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of the
6 House of Representatives and the President pro tempore
7 of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements for the
8 award, on behalf of Congress, of a gold medal of appro-
9 priate design to Joseph Maxwell “Max” Cleland.

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

15 (c) DUPLICATE MEDALS.—

16 (1) IN GENERAL.—Under such regulations as
17 the Secretary may prescribe, the Secretary may
18 strike and sell duplicates in bronze of the gold medal
19 struck under this Act at a price sufficient to cover
20 the costs of the medals, including labor, materials,
21 dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses.

22 (2) SALE OF DUPLICATE MEDALS.—The
23 amounts received from the sale of duplicate medals
24 under paragraph (1) shall be deposited in the United
25 States Mint Public Enterprise Fund.

1 **SEC. 4. STATUS OF MEDALS.**

2 Medals struck under this Act are national medals for
3 purposes of chapter 51 of title 31, United States Code.

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