

109TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2872

To require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins in commemoration
of Louis Braille.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 13, 2005

Mr. NEY (for himself and Mr. CARDIN) introduced the following bill; which
was referred to the Committee on Financial Services

A BILL

To require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins
in commemoration of Louis Braille.

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 “Louis Braille Bicenten-

5 nial—Braille Literacy Commemorative Coin Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 The Congress finds as follows:

8 (1) Louis Braille, who invented the Braille

9 method for reading and writing by the blind that has

10 allowed millions of blind people to be literate partici-

1 pants in their societies, was born in Coupvray, a
2 small village near Paris, on January 4, 1809.

3 (2) Braille lost his sight at the age of three
4 after injuring himself with an awl in the shop of his
5 father Rene, a maker of harnesses and other objects
6 of leather.

7 (3) A youth who was both intelligent and cre-
8 ative and was blessed with dedicated parents, a
9 thoughtful local priest and an energetic local school-
10 teacher, Braille adapted to the situation and at-
11 tended local school with other youths of his age, an
12 unheard-of practice for a blind child of the period.

13 (4) At the age of 10, when his schooling other-
14 wise would have stopped, Braille—with the aid of
15 the priest and schoolteacher—was given a scholar-
16 ship by a local nobleman and went to Paris to at-
17 tend the Royal Institute for Blind Children where he
18 became the youngest pupil.

19 (5) At the school, most instruction was oral but
20 Braille found there were books for the blind—large,
21 expensive-to-produce books in which the text was of
22 large letters embossed upon the page.

23 (6) Soon Braille had read all 14 books in the
24 school, but thirsted for more.

1 (7) A captain in Napoleon’s army, Charles
2 Barbier de la Serre, had invented “night writing”, a
3 method for communicating on the battlefield amidst
4 the thick smoke of combat or at night without light-
5 ing a match—which would aid enemy gunners—that
6 used dots and dashes that were felt and interpreted
7 with the fingers, and later adapted the method for
8 use by the blind, calling it Sonography because it
9 represented words by sounds, rather than spelling.

10 (8) Braille adopted the Sonography method in-
11 stantly but soon recognized that the basis in sound
12 and the large number of dots—as many as 12—
13 used to represent words was too cumbersome.

14 (9) By the age of 15, and using a blunt awl,
15 the same sort of tool that had blinded him, Braille
16 had developed what is essentially modern Braille, a
17 code that uses no more than 6 dots in a “cell” of
18 2 columns of 3 dots each to represent each letter
19 and contains a system of punctuation and of “con-
20 tractions” to speed writing and reading.

21 (10) In contrast to the bulky books consisting
22 of large embossed letters, Braille books can contain
23 as many as 1000 characters or contractions on a
24 standard 11-by-12-inch page of heavy paper, and to
25 this day Braille can be punched with an awl-like

1 “stylus” into paper held in a metal “slate” that is
2 very similar to the ones that Louis Braille adapted
3 from Barbier’s original “night writing” devices.

4 (11) Also a talented organist who supported
5 himself by giving concerts, Braille went on to de-
6 velop the Braille representation of music and in
7 1829 published the first-ever Braille book, a manual
8 about how to read and write music.

9 (12) 8 years later, in 1837, Braille followed
10 that publication with another book detailing a sys-
11 tem of representation of mathematics.

12 (13) Braille’s talents were quickly recognized,
13 and at 17 he was made the first blind apprentice
14 teacher at the school, where he taught algebra,
15 grammar, music, and geography.

16 (14) He and two blind classmates, his friends
17 who probably were the first people to learn to read
18 and write Braille, later became the first three blind
19 full professors at the school.

20 (15) However, despite the fact that many blind
21 people enthusiastically adopted the system of writing
22 and reading, there was great skepticism among
23 sighted people about the real usefulness of Braille’s
24 code, and even at the Royal Institute, it was not
25 taught until after his death on January 6, 1852.

1 (16) Braille did not start to spread widely until
2 1868 when a group of British men—later to become
3 known as the Royal National Institute for the
4 Blind—began publicizing and teaching the system.

5 (17) Braille did not become the official and sole
6 method of reading and writing for blind United
7 States citizens until the 20th Century.

8 (18) Helen Keller, a Braille reader of another
9 generation, said: “Braille has been a most precious
10 aid to me in many ways. It made my going to college
11 possible—it was the only method by which I could
12 take notes on lectures. All my examination papers
13 were copied for me in this system. I use Braille as
14 a spider uses its web—to catch thoughts that flit
15 across my mind for speeches, messages and manu-
16 scripts.”.

17 (19) While rapid technological advances in the
18 20th Century have greatly aided the blind in many
19 ways by speeding access to information, each ad-
20 vance has seen a commensurate drop in the teaching
21 of Braille, to the point that only about 10 percent
22 of blind students today are taught the system.

23 (20) However, for the blind not to know Braille
24 is in itself a handicap, because literacy is the ability

1 to read and the ability to write and the ability to do
2 the two interactively.

3 (21) The National Federation of the Blind, the
4 Nation's oldest membership organization consisting
5 of blind members, has been a champion of the
6 Braille code, of Braille literacy for all blind people
7 and of the memory of Louis Braille, and continues
8 its Braille literacy efforts today through its divisions
9 emphasizing Braille literacy, emphasizing education
10 of blind children and emphasizing employment of the
11 blind.

12 (22) Braille literacy aids the blind in taking re-
13 sponsible and self-sufficient roles in society, such as
14 employment: while 70 percent of the blind are unem-
15 ployed, 85 percent of the employed blind are Braille-
16 literate.

17 **SEC. 3. COIN SPECIFICATIONS.**

18 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of the Treasury
19 (hereafter in this Act referred to as the “Secretary”) shall
20 mint and issue not more than 400,000 \$1 coins bearing
21 the designs specified in section 4(a), each of which shall—

22 (1) weigh 26.73 grams;

23 (2) have a diameter of 1.500 inches; and

24 (3) contain 90 percent silver and 10 percent
25 copper.

1 (b) LEGAL TENDER.—The coins minted under this
2 Act shall be legal tender, as provided in section 5103 of
3 title 31, United States Code.

4 (c) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of section
5 5134 of title 31, United States Code, all coins minted
6 under this Act shall be considered to be numismatic items.

7 **SEC. 4. DESIGN OF COINS.**

8 (a) DESIGN REQUIREMENTS.—

9 (1) IN GENERAL.—The design of the coins
10 minted under this Act shall be emblematic of the life
11 and legacy of Louis Braille.

12 (2) OBVERSE.—The design on the obverse shall
13 bear a representation of the image of Louis Braille.

14 (3) REVERSE.—The design on the reverse shall
15 emphasize Braille literacy and shall specifically in-
16 clude the word for Braille in Braille code (the
17 Braille capital sign and the letters Brl) represented
18 in a way that complies with section 3 of Specifica-
19 tion 800 of the National Library Service for the
20 Blind and Physically Handicapped of the Library of
21 Congress specifications for Braille, and is tactilely
22 indiscernible from printed or written Braille.

23 (4) DESIGNATION AND INSCRIPTIONS.—On
24 each coin minted under this Act there shall be—

25 (A) a designation of the value of the coin;

1 (B) an inscription of the year “2009”; and

2 (C) inscriptions of the words “Liberty”,

3 “In God We Trust”, “United States of Amer-

4 ica”, and “E Pluribus Unum”.

5 (b) SELECTION.—The design for the coins minted
6 under this Act shall be—

7 (1) selected by the Secretary after consultation
8 with the Commission of Fine Arts and the National
9 Federation of the Blind; and

10 (2) reviewed by the Citizens Coinage Advisory
11 Committee.

12 **SEC. 5. ISSUANCE OF COINS.**

13 (a) QUALITY OF COINS.—Coins minted under this
14 Act shall be issued in uncirculated and proof qualities.

15 (b) MINT FACILITY.—Only 1 facility of the United
16 States Mint may be used to strike any particular quality
17 of the coins minted under this Act.

18 (c) PERIOD FOR ISSUANCE.—The Secretary may
19 issue coins minted under this Act only during the 1-year
20 period beginning on January 1, 2009.

21 **SEC. 6. SALE OF COINS.**

22 (a) SALE PRICE.—The coins issued under this Act
23 shall be sold by the Secretary at a price equal to the sum
24 of—

25 (1) the face value of the coins;

1 (2) the surcharge provided in section 7(a) with
2 respect to such coins; and

3 (3) the cost of designing and issuing the coins
4 (including labor, materials, dies, use of machinery,
5 overhead expenses, marketing, and shipping).

6 (b) BULK SALES.—The Secretary shall make bulk
7 sales of the coins issued under this Act at a reasonable
8 discount.

9 (c) PREPAID ORDERS.—

10 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall accept
11 prepaid orders for the coins minted under this Act
12 before the issuance of such coins.

13 (2) DISCOUNT.—Sale prices with respect to pre-
14 paid orders under paragraph (1) shall be at a rea-
15 sonable discount.

16 **SEC. 7. SURCHARGES.**

17 (a) SURCHARGE REQUIRED.—All sales of coins under
18 this Act shall include a surcharge of \$10 per coin.

19 (b) DISTRIBUTION.—Subject to section 5134(f) of
20 title 31, United States Code, all surcharges which are re-
21 ceived by the Secretary from the sale of coins issued under
22 this Act shall be promptly paid by the Secretary to the
23 the National Federation of the Blind to further its pro-
24 grams to promote Braille literacy.

1 (c) AUDITS.—The National Federation of the Blind
2 shall be subject to the audit requirements of section
3 5134(f)(2) of title 31, United States Code, with regard
4 to the amounts received by the National Federation under
5 subsection (b).

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