

Suspend the Rules and Pass the Bill, H.R. 1726, with An Amendment

(The amendment strikes all after the enacting clause and inserts a new text)

113TH CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

H. R. 1726

To award a Congressional Gold Medal to the 65th Infantry Regiment, known as the Borinqueneers.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 25, 2013

Mr. POSEY (for himself and Mr. PIERLUISI) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Financial Services, and in addition to the Committee on House Administration, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To award a Congressional Gold Medal to the 65th Infantry Regiment, known as the Borinqueneers.

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. FINDINGS.**

4 The Congress finds the following:

5 (1) In 1898, the United States acquired Puerto
6 Rico in the Treaty of Paris that ended the Spanish-
7 American War and, by the following year, Congress

1 had authorized raising a unit of volunteer soldiers in
2 the newly acquired territory.

3 (2) In May 1917, two months after legislation
4 granting United States citizenship to individuals
5 born in Puerto Rico was signed into law, and one
6 month after the United States entered World War I,
7 the unit was transferred to the Panama Canal Zone
8 in part because United States Army policy at the
9 time restricted most segregated units to noncombat
10 roles, even though the regiment could have contrib-
11 uted to the fighting effort.

12 (3) In June 1920, the unit was re-designated as
13 the “65th Infantry Regiment, United States Army”,
14 and served as the United States military’s last seg-
15 regated unit composed primarily of Hispanic sol-
16 diers.

17 (4) In January 1943, 13 months after the at-
18 tack on Pearl Harbor that marked the entry of the
19 United States into World War II, the Regiment
20 again deployed to the Panama Canal Zone before de-
21 ploying overseas in the spring of 1944.

22 (5) Despite relatively limited combat service in
23 World War II, the Regiment suffered casualties in
24 the course of defending against enemy attacks, with
25 individual soldiers earning one Distinguished Service

1 Cross, two Silver Stars, two Bronze Stars and 90
2 Purple Hearts. The Regiment received campaign
3 participation credit for Rome-Arno, Rhineland,
4 Ardennes-Alsace, and Central Europe.

5 (6) Although an executive order issued by
6 President Harry S. Truman in July 1948 declared
7 it to be United States policy to ensure equality of
8 treatment and opportunity for all persons in the
9 armed services without respect to race or color, im-
10 plementation of this policy had yet to be fully real-
11 ized when armed conflict broke out on the Korean
12 Peninsula in June 1950, and both African-American
13 soldiers and Puerto Rican soldiers served in seg-
14 regated units.

15 (7) Brigadier General William W. Harris, who
16 served as the Regiment's commander during the
17 early stages of the Korean War, later recalled that
18 he had initially been reluctant to take the position
19 because of "prejudice" within the military and "the
20 feeling of the officers and even the brass of the Pen-
21 tagon . . . that the Puerto Rican wouldn't make a
22 good combat soldier. . . I know my contemporaries
23 felt that way and, in all honesty, I must admit that
24 at the time I had the same feeling . . . that the
25 Puerto Rican was a rum and Coca-Cola soldier."

1 (8) One of the first opportunities the Regiment
2 had to prove its combat worthiness arose on the eve
3 of the Korean War during Operation PORTREX,
4 one of the largest military exercises that had been
5 conducted up until that point, where the Regiment
6 distinguished itself by repelling an offensive con-
7 sisting of over 32,000 troops from the 82nd Air-
8 borne Division and the United States Marine Corps,
9 supported by the Navy and Air Force, thereby dem-
10 onstrating that the Regiment could hold its own
11 against some of the best-trained forces in the United
12 States military.

13 (9) In August 1950, with the United States
14 Army's situation in Korea deteriorating, the Depart-
15 ment of the Army's headquarters decided to bolster
16 the 3rd Infantry Division and, owing in part to the
17 65th Infantry Regiment's outstanding performance
18 during Operation PORTREX, it was among the
19 units selected for the combat assignment. The deci-
20 sion to send the Regiment to Korea and attach it to
21 the 3rd Infantry Division was a landmark change in
22 the United States military's racial and ethnic policy.

23 (10) As the Regiment sailed to Asia in Sep-
24 tember 1950, members of the unit informally de-
25 cided to call themselves the "Borinqueneers", a term

1 derived from the Taíno word for Puerto Rico mean-
2 ing “land of the brave lord”.

3 (11) The story of the 65th Infantry Regiment
4 during the Korean War has been aptly described as
5 “one of pride, courage, heartbreak, and redemp-
6 tion”.

7 (12) Fighting as a segregated unit from 1950
8 to 1952, the Regiment participated in some of the
9 fiercest battles of the war, and its toughness, cour-
10 age and loyalty earned the admiration of many who
11 had previously harbored reservations about Puerto
12 Rican soldiers based on lack of previous fighting ex-
13 perience and negative stereotypes, including Briga-
14 dier General Harris, whose experience eventually led
15 him to regard the Regiment as “the best damn sol-
16 diers that I had ever seen”.

17 (13) After disembarking at Pusan, South Korea
18 in September 1950, the Regiment blocked the escape
19 routes of retreating North Korean units and over-
20 came pockets of resistance. The most significant bat-
21 tle took place near Yongam-ni in October when the
22 Regiment routed a force of 400 enemy troops. By
23 the end of the month, the Regiment had taken 921
24 prisoners while killing or wounding more than 600
25 enemy soldiers. Its success led General Douglas

1 MacArthur, Commander-in-Chief of the United Na-
2 tions Command in Korea, to observe that the Regi-
3 ment was “showing magnificent ability and courage
4 in field operations”.

5 (14) The Regiment landed on the eastern coast
6 of North Korea in early November 1950. In Decem-
7 ber 1950, following China’s intervention in the war,
8 the Regiment engaged in a series of fierce battles to
9 cover the rear guard of the 1st Marine Division dur-
10 ing the fighting retreat from the Chosin Reservoir to
11 the enclave at Hungnam, North Korea, one of the
12 greatest withdrawals in modern military history.

13 (15) When General MacArthur ordered the
14 evacuation of Hungnam in mid-December, the Regi-
15 ment was instrumental in securing the port, and was
16 among the last units—if not the last unit—to depart
17 the beachhead on Christmas Eve, suffering signifi-
18 cant casualties in the process. Under the Regiment’s
19 protection, 105,000 troops and 100,000 refugees
20 were evacuated, along with 350,000 tons of supplies
21 and 17,500 military vehicles.

22 (16) The brutal winter conditions during the
23 campaign presented significant hardships for sol-
24 diers in the Regiment, who lacked appropriate gear
25 to fight in sub-zero temperatures.

1 (17) Between January and March 1951, the
2 Regiment participated in numerous operations to re-
3 cover and retain South Korean territory lost to the
4 enemy, assaulting heavily fortified enemy positions
5 and conducting the last recorded battalion-sized bay-
6 onet assault in United States Army history.

7 (18) On January 31, 1951, the commander of
8 Eighth Army, Lieutenant General Matthew B.
9 Ridgway, wrote to the Regiment's commander:
10 "What I saw and heard of your regiment reflects
11 great credit on you, your regiment, and the people
12 of Puerto Rico, who can be proud of their valiant
13 sons. I am confident that their battle records and
14 training levels will win them high honors. . . . Their
15 conduct in battle has served only to increase the
16 high regard in which I hold these fine troops."

17 (19) On February 3, 1951, General MacArthur
18 wrote: "The Puerto Ricans forming the ranks of the
19 gallant 65th Infantry on the battlefields of Korea by
20 valor, determination, and a resolute will to victory
21 give daily testament to their invincible loyalty to the
22 United States and the fervor of their devotion to
23 those immutable standards of human relations to
24 which the Americans and Puerto Ricans are in com-
25 mon dedicated. They are writing a brilliant record of

1 achievement in battle and I am proud indeed to have
2 them in this command. I wish that we might have
3 many more like them.”.

4 (20) The Regiment played a central role in the
5 United States military’s counteroffensive responding
6 to a major push by the Chinese Communist Forces
7 (CCF) in 1951, winning praise for its superb per-
8 formance in multiple battles, including Operations
9 KILLER and RIPPER, as well as for its actions on
10 February 14th, when the Regiment inflicted nearly
11 1,000 enemy casualties at a cost of only one killed
12 and six wounded, almost singlehandedly annihilating
13 a North Korean infantry regiment that had infil-
14 trated the defenses of the 3rd Infantry Division’s
15 headquarters.

16 (21) By 1952, senior United States com-
17 manders ordered that replacement soldiers from
18 Puerto Rico would no longer be limited to service in
19 the Regiment, but could be made available to fill
20 personnel shortages in non-segregated units both in-
21 side and outside the 3rd Infantry Division. This was
22 a major milestone in United States Army policy
23 that, paradoxically, harmed the Regiment by depriv-
24 ing it of some of Puerto Rico’s most able soldiers.

1 (22) Beyond the many hardships endured by
2 most American soldiers in Korea, the Regiment
3 faced unique challenges arising from discrimination
4 and prejudice.

5 (23) In 1953, the now fully integrated Regi-
6 ment earned admiration for its relentless defense of
7 Outpost Harry, during which it confronted multiple
8 company-size probes, full-scale regimental attacks,
9 and heavy artillery and mortar fire from Chinese
10 forces, earning one Distinguished Service Cross, 14
11 Silver Stars, 23 Bronze Stars, and 67 Purple
12 Hearts, in operations that Major General Eugene W.
13 Ridings described as “highly successful in that the
14 enemy was denied the use of one of his best routes
15 of approach into the friendly position”. The recipient
16 of the Distinguished Service Cross was then-First
17 Lieutenant Richard E. Cavazos, a Mexican-Amer-
18 ican, who went on to become the first Latino to rise
19 to the rank of four-star general in the United States
20 Army.

21 (24) For its extraordinary service during the
22 Korean War, the Regiment received two Presidential
23 Unit Citations (Army and Navy), two Republic of
24 Korea Presidential Unit Citations, a Meritorious
25 Unit Commendation (Army), a Navy Unit Com-

1 mendment, the Bravery Gold Medal of Greece, and
2 campaign participation credits for United Nations
3 Offensive, CCF Intervention, First United Nations
4 Counteroffensive, CCF Spring Offensive, United Na-
5 tions Summer-Fall Offensive, Second Korean Win-
6 ter, Korea Summer-Fall 1952, Third Korean Win-
7 ter, and Korea Summer 1953.

8 (25) In Korea, soldiers in the Regiment earned
9 a total of nine Distinguished Service Crosses, ap-
10 proximately 250 Silver Stars, over 600 Bronze
11 Stars, more than 2,700 Purple Hearts. On March
12 18, 2014, Master Sergeant Juan E. Negrón
13 Martínez received the Medal of Honor, the Nation's
14 highest award for military valor, for actions taken
15 on April 28, 1951 near Kalma-Eri, Korea.

16 (26) In all, some 61,000 Puerto Ricans served
17 in the United States Army during the Korean War,
18 the bulk of them with the 65th Infantry Regiment—
19 and over the course of the war, Puerto Rican sol-
20 diers suffered a disproportionately high casualty
21 rate, with over 740 killed and over 2,300 wounded.

22 (27) In April 1956, as part of the reduction in
23 forces following the Korean War, the 65th Infantry
24 Regiment was deactivated from the regular Army
25 and, in February 1959, became the only regular

1 Army unit to have ever been transferred to the Na-
2 tional Guard, when its 1st battalion and its regi-
3 mental number were assigned to the Puerto Rico
4 National Guard, where it has remained ever since.

5 (28) In 1982, the United States Army Center
6 of Military History officially authorized granting the
7 65th Infantry Regiment the special designation of
8 “Borinqueneers”.

9 (29) In the years since the Korean War, the
10 achievements of the Regiment have been recognized
11 in various ways, including—

12 (A) the naming of streets in honor of the
13 Regiment in San Juan, Puerto Rico and The
14 Bronx, New York;

15 (B) the erecting of monuments and
16 plaques to honor the Regiment at Arlington Na-
17 tional Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia; the San
18 Juan National Historic Site in San Juan, Puer-
19 to Rico; Fort Logan National Cemetery in Den-
20 ver, Colorado; and at sites in Boston, Massa-
21 chusetts; Worcester, Massachusetts; Buffalo,
22 New York; and Ocala, Florida;

23 (C) the renaming of a park in
24 Buenaventura Lake, Florida as the “65th In-
25 fantry Veterans Park”;

1 (D) the dedication of land for a park and
2 monument to honor the Regiment in New Brit-
3 ain, Connecticut;

4 (E) the adoption or introduction of resolu-
5 tions or proclamations honoring the Regiment
6 by many state and municipal governments, in-
7 cluding in the states and territories of Cali-
8 fornia, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Illinois,
9 Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New Jer-
10 sey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsyl-
11 vania, Puerto Rico, and Texas; and

12 (F) the issuance by the United States
13 Postal Service of a Korean War commemorative
14 stamp depicting soldiers from the Regiment.

15 (30) In a speech delivered on September 20,
16 2000, at a ceremony in Arlington National Cemetery
17 in honor of the Regiment, Secretary of the Army
18 Louis Caldera said: “Even as the 65th struggled
19 against all deadly enemies in the field, they were
20 fighting a rearguard action against a more insidious
21 adversary—the cumulative effects of ill-conceived
22 military policies, leadership shortcomings, and espe-
23 cially racial and organizational prejudices, all exacer-
24 bated by America’s unpreparedness for war and the
25 growing pains of an Army forced by law and cir-

1 cumstance to carry out racial integration. Together
2 these factors would take their inevitable toll on the
3 65th, leaving scars that have yet to heal for so many
4 of the Regiment's proud and courageous soldiers.”.

5 (31) Secretary Caldera further stated: “To the
6 veterans of the 65th Infantry Regiment who, in that
7 far off land fifty years ago, fought with rare courage
8 even as you endured misfortune and injustice, thank
9 you for doing your duty. There can be no greater
10 praise than that for any soldier of the United States
11 Army.”.

12 (32) Secretary Caldera also noted that “[t]he
13 men of the 65th who served in Korea are a signifi-
14 cant part of a proud tradition of service” that in-
15 cludes the Japanese American 442nd Regimental
16 Combat Team, the African American Tuskegee Air-
17 men, and “many other unsung minority units
18 throughout the history of our armed forces whose
19 stories have never been fully told”.

20 (33) The service of the men of the 65th Infan-
21 try Regiment is emblematic of the contributions to
22 the armed forces that have been made by hundreds
23 of thousands of brave and patriotic United States
24 citizens from Puerto Rico over generations, from
25 World War I to the most recent conflicts in Afghani-

1 stan and Iraq, and in other overseas contingency op-
2 erations.

3 **SEC. 2. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

4 (a) AWARD AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of the
5 House of Representatives and the President pro tempore
6 of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements for the
7 award, on behalf of the Congress, of a single gold medal
8 of appropriate design in honor of the 65th Infantry Regi-
9 ment, known as the Borinqueneers, in recognition of its
10 pioneering military service, devotion to duty, and many
11 acts of valor in the face of adversity.

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

18 (c) SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.—

19 (1) IN GENERAL.—Following the award of the
20 gold medal in honor of the 65th Infantry Regiment,
21 known as the Borinqueneers, the gold medal shall be
22 given to the Smithsonian Institution, where it shall
23 be available for display as appropriate and made
24 available for research.

1 (2) SENSE OF THE CONGRESS.—It is the sense
2 of the Congress that the Smithsonian Institution
3 shall make the gold medal received under this Act
4 available for display elsewhere, particularly at other
5 appropriate locations associated with the 65th Infan-
6 try Regiment, including locations in Puerto Rico.

7 **SEC. 3. DUPLICATE MEDALS.**

8 Under such regulations as the Secretary may pre-
9 scribe, the Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in
10 bronze of the gold medal struck under section 2, at a price
11 sufficient to cover the costs of the medals, including labor,
12 materials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses.

13 **SEC. 4. NATIONAL MEDALS.**

14 Medals struck pursuant to this Act are national med-
15 als for purposes of chapter 51 of title 31, United States
16 Code.