

Testimony of Congresswoman Anna G. Eshoo
House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Member Day Hearing
September 29, 2021

Thank you, Chairwoman Johnson and Ranking Member Lucas, for giving me the opportunity to testify at today's Member Day hearing, and I would like to discuss my legislation, the *National Civilian Medals Improvement Act*.

Most Americans are familiar with the Nobel Prize, but few know that the U.S. has its own National Civilian Medals for science, technology, the arts, and humanities. Unlike the Nobel Prize which is awarded annually, presidents have awarded the National Civilian Medals inconsistently which I believe contributes to the lack of awareness of these medals among the public. In 2019, I wrote to then-President Trump urging him to award the National Medal of Science and the National Medal of Technology and Innovation, but he unfortunately never did during his term. As such, these medals have not been awarded for seven years which further tarnishes their reputation. This is particularly disheartening given that every American has benefited from the extraordinary work of scientists to protect us from the Covid-19 pandemic by developing highly effective vaccines so quickly.

My legislation addresses this problem by requiring each medal to be awarded annually on a fixed schedule. To ensure the prestige of the medals, the president is authorized to award each medal to no more than five Americans every year. My legislation also creates a new National Medal of Social Sciences to ensure parity with similar awards. Although the current National Medal of Science can be awarded to social scientists, the vast majority have been awarded to academicians in the "hard sciences." Economists, psychologists, historians, and other social scientists deserve equal recognition for their work. The *National Civilian Medals Improvement Act* will better recognize the many extraordinary Americans who contribute to the arts and sciences of our nation.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, and I look forward to working with you to advance this important legislation.