

2011 Medal of Honor Commemorative Coin Program

Mar 16, 2011

The Medal of Honor is the highest award for valor in action against an enemy force that can be bestowed upon an individual serving in the U.S. Armed Forces. It is presented to a person who distinguishes him or herself conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his or her life above and beyond the call of duty while:

- engaged in action against an enemy of the United States;
- engaged in military operations involving conflict with an opposing foreign force; or
- serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in an armed conflict against an opposing armed force in which the United States is not a belligerent party.

Fewer than 3,500 Medals of Honor have ever been awarded.

The Medal of Honor was first authorized by Congress in 1861 as the Navy's highest personal decoration, with the Army Medal of Honor authorized in 1862 and the Air Force Medal of Honor in 1956. The medals are presented by the President in the name of Congress.

The "Medal of Honor Commemorative Coin Act of 2009," ([Public Law 111-91](#)) was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Obama on November 6, 2009. It authorizes the Secretary of the Treasury to mint and issue up to 100,000 gold \$5 and up to 500,000 silver \$1 coins in recognition and celebration of the establishment of the Medal of Honor in 1861.

The act calls for the designs to be emblematic of the traditions, legacy and heritage of the Medal of Honor and the distinguished service of its recipients.

As authorized, the United States Mint shall produce \$5 gold and \$1 silver coins in both proof and uncirculated qualities. Surcharges in the amount of \$35 for each gold coin and \$10 for each silver coin are authorized to be paid to the Congressional Medal of Honor Foundation.

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The foundation assists in perpetuating the legacy of the Medal of Honor by funding programs to promote the ideals of courage, sacrifice, selfless service and patriotism among the American public.

The Designs

\$5 Gold Coin

- **Gold obverse** (heads side): depicts the original Medal of Honor authorized by Congress in 1861 as the Navy's highest personal decoration. The inscriptions are *LIBERTY, 1861, 2011, IN GOD WE TRUST* and *MEDAL OF HONOR*.
- **Gold reverse** (tails): features Minerva, based on the common central image on both the original Navy and Army Medals of Honor. Minerva, standing with a shield representing the Army and Navy in her right hand and the Union flag in her left hand, is flanked by a field artillery cannon and wheel of the Civil War era. Inscriptions are *UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, \$5* and *E PLURIBUS UNUM*. The gold coin designs are emblematic of the heritage and legacy of the original Medal of Honor and the era in which it was first established.

\$1 Silver Coin

- **Silver obverse** (heads side): depicts the three current Army, Navy, and Air Force Medals of Honor, left to right. The ribbon with field of stars in the center is the common feature of all three medals, reflecting the joint nature of modern era warfare and the fact that the Medal of Honor is the only U.S. military medal worn around the neck. Inscriptions are *LIBERTY, IN GOD WE TRUST, 1861 - 2011* and *MEDAL OF HONOR*.
- **Silver reverse** (tails): depicts a contemporary infantry soldier carrying a wounded soldier to safety under enemy fire, reflecting the courage and self-sacrifice of all Medal of Honor recipients. Inscriptions are *UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, ONE DOLLAR* and *E PLURIBUS UNUM*. This image conveys the courage, selfless sacrifice and patriotism of Medal of Honor recipients, as well as the criteria established by Congress in 1963 requiring that all Medals of Honor be awarded only for heroic action in combat.

For more information and to view the coins, go to www.usmint.gov.