Commemorative Legislation in Congress: Trends and Observations, 93rd Through 115th Congresses

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In 1783, the Continental Congress authorized the nation’s first commemoration, an equestrian statue to George Washington. Since that time, Congress has used commemoratives to honor a myriad of people, groups, and events that it deemed important to American collective memory. Today, Members of Congress introduce, and the House and Senate consider, six primary types of commemorative legislation. These measures

- name federal facilities, including post offices, federal buildings, courthouses, and Veterans Affairs facilities and hospitals;
- direct the United States Postal Service (USPS) to issue commemorative and semipostal stamps;
- instruct the U.S. Mint to issue commemorative coins;
- award Congressional Gold Medals;
- authorize and recognize national memorials in the District of Columbia and around the country; and
- create permanent commemorative observances by authorizing federal holidays and patriotic and national observances, and create temporary observances through the adoption of House and Senate resolutions or concurrent resolutions.

Using research conducted by the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University’s capstone class over the 2019-2020 academic year, this report presents data on these six types of commemoratives introduced and considered from the 93rd Congress (1973-1974) through the 115th Congress (2017-2018). The data show that the introduction of commemorative legislation has varied over time, with different types of commemoratives more popular at different times. Overall, the total number of commemorative measures introduced varied by Congress from the 93rd Congress until the adoption of a House rule in the 104th Congress (1995-1996) to limit the introduction or consideration of date-specific commemorative legislation (House Rule XII, clause 5). Following the rule change, the overall number of date-specific commemorative measures introduced and considered decreased, before returning to or exceeding the pre-rules change level. Patterns also exist for non-date-specific commemorative legislation, each subject to specific conditions that permitted or restricted the consideration of measures to honor individuals, groups, and events.

This report concludes with observations about commemorations in Congress since the 93rd Congress. Specifically, the data show that placing limits on the introduction and consideration of various types of commemorative legislation can be an effective means of reducing the time spent on commemorative measures, especially in the House of Representatives. Further, congressional endorsement of a commemoration can have lasting impact for individuals and groups and increase the prominence of recognized events.
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Since its founding, the United States has debated how to recognize and memorialize historical actors and events. In the earliest known act of commemoration, in 1783, the Continental Congress authorized the new nation’s first commemorative—an equestrian statue to George Washington.\(^1\) Since that time, opinion on how to commemorate important people and events has fluctuated. In 1800, for example, the House of Representatives debated a bill to erect a mausoleum to George Washington “in testimony of the love and gratitude of the citizens of the United States.”\(^2\) The measure’s consideration sparked debate about the form of commemoration. Some argued that honoring George Washington with a mausoleum was nothing more than remembering the “memory of that great man [as] … a heap of large inanimate objects.”\(^3\) Others suggested that there were more “rational ways to remember national heroes, by the simple act of reading history, for instance.”\(^4\)

Since the 1970s, Congress has primarily utilized six types of commemoratives to honor individuals, groups, and events: naming public buildings, including post offices; authorizing postage stamps; issuing commemorative coins; awarding Congressional Gold Medals; establishing memorials and commemorative works; and recognizing commemorative observances, including federal holidays. This report evaluates the number of measures introduced in each category from the 93\(^{rd}\) Congress (1973-1974) through the 115\(^{th}\) Congress (2017-2018) using data collected from Congress.gov in partnership with a capstone class at the Bush School of Government & Public Service at Texas A&M University. The report begins with a discussion of commemoration as a representational tool for Members of Congress. The report then evaluates the data for the introduction and consideration of each of the six types of commemorative legislation during the 93\(^{rd}\) through the 115\(^{th}\) Congresses. The report concludes with a discussion of observations from the data.

## Commemoration as Representation

Members of Congress strive to meet their constituents’ needs.\(^5\) They can accomplish this goal in a myriad of ways, including introducing legislation and conducting oversight to influence public policy;\(^6\) assisting constituents to access services offered by the executive branch (casework);\(^7\) or

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\(^2\) “Mausoleum to Washington,” *Annals of Congress*, vol. 10 (December 5, 1800), pp. 799-800.


\(^7\) Lee Hamilton, “Constituent Service and Representation,” *The Public Manager*, vol. 21, no. 2 (Summer 1992). For
publicly recognizing people, places, and events that are important for their districts or states. Members of Congress most frequently recognize people, places, and events through speeches on the House or Senate floor or through the introduction of commemorative legislation.

Each Member of Congress interprets representation differently. Scholars have identified the introduction of commemorative measures as one way that Members of Congress can fulfill their representational responsibilities and connect with their constituents. While some of these commemorative measures may be narrowly tailored to a Member’s geographic constituency and may not receive much attention outside of the district or state, other measures may have a more durable effect. For example, Members of Congress can refer back to measures they or other Members introduced, even if the House of Representatives or Senate did not consider those measures.

Also, some commemorative measures do have a national appeal and can serve as a broader form of representation by supporting constituent interests that cross district boundaries. These might include commemorative measures to recognize wars (e.g., the World War I Memorial in Washington, DC, the World War I Museum in Kansas City, MO, or the World War II Memorial Commemorative Coin); military units (e.g., the Monument Men or the 65th Infantry Regiments—nicknamed the Borinqueneers); or historic American achievements (Apollo 11 Congressional Gold Medal and 50th Anniversary commemorative coin). In these instances, commemorative legislation can help fulfill a broader representational duty while also providing congressional recognition to particular events, groups, or individuals.

Methodology

In each Congress, many Members introduce commemorative legislation and the House and Senate debate and pass a number of commemorative measures. To understand how the introduction and consideration of commemorative legislation has evolved, the Congressional Research Service (CRS) partnered with graduate students at the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University during the 2019-2020 academic year (September 2019 to May 2020) to collect and analyze data on commemorative measures. Data were collected from Congress.gov for six types of commemoratives—naming federal buildings, authorizing postage stamps, issuing commemorative coins, awarding Congressional Gold Medals, establishing


memorials and commemorative works, and recognizing time periods—that were introduced from the 93rd Congress (1973-1974) through the 115th Congress (2017-2018).

One limitation for the data collection was that Congress.gov includes full text search capabilities beginning in the 101st Congress (1989-1990). Prior to that, the Congress.gov search engine does not allow for full text legislative searches, but does allow searches of measures’ legislative summaries (including the titles). As a result of this limitation, it is possible that some relevant commemorative measures were excluded.

Another limitation was that some legislative measures included multiple commemorations; in these cases each of the commemorations was counted and categorized, so that a single bill could appear more than once in the dataset of commemorative categories. Similarly, legislative actions, such as introduction and enactment, may also have been counted more than once if a legislative measure included commemorations across different categories. Figure 1 reports the Congress.gov search terms for each type of commemorative legislation. For a detailed explanation of search terms for each type of commemorative legislation, see the Appendix.

**Figure 1. Congress.gov Search Terms for Commemorative Legislation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commemorative Type</th>
<th>Congress.gov Search Terms</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Naming Federal Buildings</td>
<td>“designate the facility,” “designate the,” and “name the”</td>
<td>Excluded dams, highways, bridges, and other structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postage Stamps</td>
<td>“postage stamp” and “semipostal”</td>
<td>Excluded post office operations, cost, revenue, and post office namings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commemorative Coins</td>
<td>“commemorative coin”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congressional Gold Medals</td>
<td>“congressional gold medal”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorials and Commemorative Works</td>
<td>“monument” and “memorial”</td>
<td>Excluded national monuments under the Antiquities Act of 1906, and artwork in the U.S. Capitol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commemorative Observances</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Holiday</td>
<td>“federal holiday”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patriotic and National Observances</td>
<td>“Title 36” “amend” and “36 U.S.C.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Time Periods</td>
<td>“day,” “week,” “month,” and “anniversary”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Commemorative Legislation Overview**

Each Congress, hundreds of commemorative measures are introduced in the House and Senate. Figure 2 reports the aggregate number of commemorative measures introduced and enacted or agreed to for each Congress in this study.
Figure 2. Commemorative Legislation Introduced and Enacted/Agreed To
93rd through 115th Congresses (1973-2018)

Source: Bush School of Government and Public Service and CRS data analysis of Congress.gov.

Note: This figure represents a count of commemorations and not a count of individual legislative vehicles. For example, sometimes one legislative vehicle contained more than one commemoration. In these cases, CRS counted the individual commemorations.

As Figure 2 shows, the number of commemorative measures introduced in Congresses from the 93rd through the 115th varied widely, as did the number of measures enacted (S., H.R., S.J.Res., and H.J. Res) or agreed to (H.Res., S.Res., H.Con.Res., and S.Con.Res). Of note is the House’s 1995 adoption of House Rule XII, clause 5, which prohibits the introduction or consideration of date-specific commemorative legislation. The House rule, which was readopted as part of the House Rules in each succeeding Congress, appears to have reduced the number of measures introduced and considered in the 104th through 106th Congresses before the number of measures returned to prerule levels (or higher).

Broadly, commemorative legislation can be divided into six categories: naming federal buildings, authorizing postage stamps, issuing commemorative coins, awarding Congressional Gold Medals, establishing memorials and commemorative works, and recognizing commemorative time periods. In total, more than 18,000 commemorative measures were introduced during the 93rd

14 For more information on legislation types and characteristics, see CRS Report R46603, Bills, Resolutions, Nominations, and Treaties: Characteristics and Examples of Use, by Jane A. Hudiburg.

through the 115th Congresses. Figure 3 shows a breakdown in the percentage of measures introduced for each type of commemorative legislation.

**Figure 3. Commemorative Legislation Introduced by Type**

93rd through 115th Congresses (1973-2018)

![Pie chart showing percentages of different types of commemorative legislation.]

**Source:** Bush School of Government & Public Service and CRS data analysis of Congress.gov data on commemorative legislation.

**Note:** Percentages add up to more than 100% due to rounding.

As shown in Figure 3, commemorative time period legislation constitutes nearly three-fourths of all commemorative measures introduced. This is followed by building namings, memorials, postage stamps and congressional gold medals, and commemorative coins. A more detailed discussion of each category of commemorative legislation and of the trends found within the introduction and consideration data for each category can be found below.

### Types of Commemorations

As mentioned previously, historically, many Members of Congress have introduced and the House and Senate have debated legislation on six types of commemoratives—naming federal buildings, authorizing postage stamps, issuing commemorative coins, awarding Congressional Gold Medals, establishing memorials and commemorative works, and recognizing time periods. Using the data outlined above and collected in coordination with the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University, this report analyzes the introduction and consideration of these six types of commemoratives during the 93rd through the 115th Congresses.

### Naming Federal Buildings

Federal buildings and facilities are located throughout the United States. Their basic purpose is to house government offices and functions, but they also “symbolize the power and stability of the
federal government.” Naming federal buildings is one way to honor, celebrate, and remember esteemed individuals, deceased elected officials, fallen military personnel, and other people of local and national importance. Figure 4 shows an example of a named courthouse and a named federal building.

**Figure 4. Examples of Named Federal Buildings**

![Named Courthouse and Federal Building](source)


An act of Congress is generally required to name a federal building. From the 93rd through the 115th Congresses, 2,301 building naming bills were introduced proposing to name 2,556 buildings. Of the introduced bills, 1,094 were enacted to name 1,201 buildings. Figure 5 shows the total number of measures introduced and enacted during the 93rd through 115th Congresses, for all types of federal buildings.

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As shown in Figure 5, the total number of bills introduced to name post offices, federal buildings, courthouses, and Veterans’ Affairs facilities has generally increased over time, with a decline in the number of measures introduced beginning in the 111th Congress (2009-2010). The number of measures enacted into law follows the same general pattern as bill introduction, but with somewhat less consistency, especially during the time period spanning the 96th Congress (1979-1980) through the 107th Congress (2001-2002), when the number of measures enacted often increased one Congress and then decreased the next. Further, beginning in the 114th Congress, the number of measures enacted has increased along with the number of introduced measures.

Additionally, as shown in Figure 6, trends in the introduction and consideration of post office naming bills mirror the trends in the larger building naming dataset. This suggests that post office naming bill introduction and consideration largely drives the overall trends in building naming.

Post Offices

Each Congress, numerous bills are introduced to rename U.S. Post Office facilities. Many of the measures would rename facilities for either a prominent local individual (e.g., the Juanita Millender-McDonald Post Office in Long Beach, CA, for the former U.S. Representative) or a servicemember who died while serving (e.g., the Sergeant First Class Robert Lee “Bobby” Hollar, Jr. Post Office in Thomaston, GA). The U.S. Post Office Department, the predecessor to the U.S. Postal Service, did not officially address the naming of post offices until 1891. Before then, postal buildings derived names from a number of sources, including town names, crossroads, and

20 Standardized written instructions on naming post offices did not exist in that period. For more information, see U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, “Post Office Names,” Post Office Records, at https://www.archives.gov/research/post-offices.
other places of interest.\textsuperscript{21} Congress first honored an individual by naming a post office through freestanding legislation in 1967.\textsuperscript{22} Since 1967, the introduction and consideration of legislation naming post offices for persons has become common practice.

From the 93\textsuperscript{rd} through the 115\textsuperscript{th} Congresses, bills were introduced to name 1,399 postal facilities, and 794 postal facilities were named in enacted legislation. The most post office namings occurred in the 110\textsuperscript{th} Congress, when 109 facilities were renamed. The fewest occurred in the 93\textsuperscript{rd} Congress, when one post office was renamed. The upper left quadrant of Figure 6 shows the total number of proposed and enacted post office building namings for each Congress from the 93\textsuperscript{rd} Congress through the 115\textsuperscript{th} Congress.

For more information on naming post office facilities, including congressional rules and practices, and sample legislation, see CRS Report RS21562, \textit{Naming Post Offices Through Legislation}, by Michelle D. Christensen.

**Other Federal Buildings**

Although legislation to name post offices is the most common type of legislation to name federal buildings,\textsuperscript{23} Members of Congress also introduce legislation to name other federal structures. These include federal buildings (e.g., the Sam Nunn Atlanta Federal Center in Atlanta, GA),\textsuperscript{24} court houses (e.g., the Andrew W. Bogue Federal Building and United States Courthouse in Rapid City, SD),\textsuperscript{25} and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) buildings and hospital facilities (e.g., the Robert J. Dole Department of Veterans Affairs Medical and Regional Office Center in Wichita, KS).\textsuperscript{26}

From the 93\textsuperscript{rd} through the 115\textsuperscript{th} Congresses, Members introduced legislation that proposed to name 1,157 nonpostal federal facilities. Figure 6 shows the total number of proposed and enacted building namings for federal buildings (upper right quadrant), courthouses (lower left quadrant), and VA buildings and hospitals (lower right quadrant) from the 93\textsuperscript{rd} through the 115\textsuperscript{th} Congresses.

\textsuperscript{21} For more information on the history of post office naming, see CRS Report RS21562, \textit{Naming Post Offices Through Legislation}, by Michelle D. Christensen.

\textsuperscript{22} P.L. 90-232 (81 Stat. 751, December 29, 1967) named a combined post office and federal office building in Bronx, NY, as the “Charles A. Buckley Post Office and Federal Office Building.”

\textsuperscript{23} For more information about naming federal buildings, see CRS Report R43539, \textit{Commemorations in Congress: Options for Honoring Individuals, Groups, and Events}, coordinated by Jacob R. Straus.

\textsuperscript{24} P.L. 105-165, 112 Stat. 37, March 20, 1998.


As Figure 6 shows, when building-naming data were examined by type of building, the overall patterns in the number of commemorative measures that appear in Figure 5 were generally no longer present, except for post office namings, which largely mirror the overall data. As such, Figure 6 shows that the numbers of proposed and enacted post office namings generally increased over the dataset (with a peak in the 110th Congress), while the numbers of namings for federal buildings, courthouses, and Veterans’ Affairs facilities and hospitals were generally variable, with no definitive pattern for the introduction or enactment of legislation.

Postage Stamps

In 1847, Congress authorized the first U.S. postage stamps,27 following Senator Daniel Webster’s advocacy of adopting a standardized postage stamp system similar to what the United Kingdom adopted in 1840.28 Early designs featured Presidents and founding fathers such as George Washington and Benjamin Franklin.29 The first series of commemorative postage stamps was issued to mark the Columbian Exposition of 1893, which was held in Chicago to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Columbus landing in America.30 Since their introduction, commemorative stamps have been popular with both collectors and the public.

29 Ibid.
Beginning with the Columbian Exposition stamp, the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) has issued commemorative stamps to celebrate persons, anniversaries, and historical and cultural phenomena. Typically, USPS issues stamps, including commemorative stamps, under its own statutory discretion and operates the program as a revenue-generating enterprise. Recent examples of commemorative stamps include Lena Horne, Ruth Asawa, the Chinese Lunar New Year, and Star Trek. Relatedly, the post office also issues semipostal stamps, which generally commemorate a cause and attempt to raise money for a designated organization. Figure 7 includes examples of the first stamps issued in the mid-1800s, an 1893 Columbian Exposition stamp (first commemorative), and two modern semipostal stamps.

**Figure 7. Examples of Early and Commemorative Stamps**

| 1847 | First U.S. Postage Stamps 5¢ Franklin; 10¢ Washington |
| 1847 | Early Commemorative Stamp 2¢ Columbian Issue |
| 2011 & 2019 | Semipostal Stamps Save Vanishing Species; Healing PTSD |


Some Members of Congress often introduce legislation to direct USPS to issue a stamp to commemorate specific people or events. From the 93rd through the 115th Congresses, Members introduced 603 measures to request a stamp design, but less than 1% were enacted or agreed to. The enacted or agreed-to legislation generally requested the creation of or created a semipostal stamp—a stamp sold at a premium to raise money for a designated cause (e.g., the Save the Vanishing Species Semipostal; P.L. 111-241). Additionally, the number of measures introduced across Congresses varied somewhat over time. Figure 8 shows postage stamp legislation introduced and enacted between the 93rd and 115th Congresses.

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Figure 8. Postage Stamp Legislation Introduced and Enacted
93rd through 115th Congresses (1973-2018)

Commemorative postage stamp legislation was coded into five thematic categories. These were stamps commemorating causes, individuals, the military, anniversaries, organizations and groups of people, and sports. Figure 9 shows a breakdown in the different categories of commemorative stamps. The largest category was stamps commemorating individuals, with a total of 235 bills introduced (38%). The smallest category was postage stamps commemorating sporting events, with a total of 4 bills (~1%).

Source: Bush School of Government and Public Service and CRS data analysis of Congress.gov.
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Figure 9. Categorization of Introduced Postage Stamp Legislation
93rd through 115th Congresses (1973-2018)

Source: Bush School of Government and Public Service and CRS data analysis of Congress.gov.

For more information about postage stamps, see CRS Report RS22611, Common Questions About Postage and Stamps, by Michelle D. Christensen; and CRS Report RS20221, Commemorative Postage Stamps: History, Selection Criteria, and Revenue Potential, by Michelle D. Christensen.

Commemorative Coins

Commemorative coins are “produced with the primary intention of creating a special souvenir to be sold (at a premium above face value) to observe or memorialize an anniversary, special occasion, or other event.” Designed and struck by the U.S. Mint pursuant to an act of Congress, these coins celebrate and honor American people, places, events, and institutions. Although they are considered legal tender, they are not minted for general circulation. Instead, they are designed to be collected and to help designated groups raise money to support group activities. Each calendar year, the U.S. Mint is statutorily limited to minting two commemorative coins.


33 Ted Schwarz, A History of United States Coinage (San Diego, CA: A.S. Barnes & Company, Inc., 1980), pp. 319-320. Today, Members of Congress introduce commemorative coin legislation to celebrate individual or events and to raise money for a designated group. For example, the 2019 Apollo 11 50th Anniversary commemorative coin’s proceeds were to benefit the Smithsonian Institution’s Air and Space Museum, the Astronauts Memorial Foundation, and the Astronaut Scholarship Foundation (P.L. 114-282, 130 Stat. 1441, December 16, 2016).
programs. Figure 10 shows the full range of commemorative coins minted in 2020 for the two authorized programs—the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame and the Women’s Suffrage Centennial.

![Figure 10. 2020 Commemorative Coins](source)


Legislation to authorize commemorative coins has been introduced in every Congress since the 97th (1981-1982), when Congress restarted the issuance of commemorative coins. Figure 11 shows the number of commemorative coin measures introduced and enacted from the 97th Congress (1981-1982) through the 115th Congress (2017-2018).

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34 31 U.S.C. §5112(m)(1). A commemorative coin program is the subject matter statutorily authorized to be depicted on a commemorative coin. Within each commemorative coin program, multiple denominations of coins might be authorized. For example, P.L. 112-201 (§3, 126 Stat. 1480, December 4, 2012) authorized a commemorative coin program for Mark Twain. The statute authorized the minting of both $5 gold coins and $1 silver coins.


36 The moratorium on new commemorative coins was in part because public interest in the coins had waned, and the Department of the Treasury was concerned that “multiplicity of designs on United States coins would tend to create confusion among the public, and to facilitate counterfeiting.” U.S. Congress, Senate, The City of New York Tercentennial Commemorative Coin—Veto Message, 83rd Cong., 2nd sess., February 3, 1954, S.Doc. 94 (Washington: GPO, 1954), p. 1.
As Figure 11 shows, the number of commemorative coin measures introduced ranged from a low of 3 in the 98th Congress to a high of 43 in the 103rd Congress. Commemorative coin laws enacted ranged from zero in the 98th and 107th Congresses to six each in the 108th, 109th, 110th, and 112th Congresses.

Some Members introduce commemorative coin measures to honor or memorialize groups, individuals, and events. Data on the introduction of commemorative coin measures were coded into seven categories based on who or what was being honored. These categories are

- causes, such as the March of Dimes Commemorative Coin;\(^37\)
- individuals, such as Chief Justice John Marshall;\(^38\)
- military units or events, such as the Black Revolutionary War Patriots;\(^39\)
- anniversaries, such as the United States Marshals Service 225th Anniversary;\(^40\)
- sports organizations and groups, such as the National Baseball Hall of Fame;\(^41\)
- general organizations and groups, such as the Girl Scouts;\(^42\)
- national symbols, such as Yellowstone National Park.\(^43\)

Figure 12 shows the number of measures introduced in each category by Congress.

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As Figure 12 shows, the largest percentage of commemorative coin measures were introduced to honor anniversaries and individuals. This was followed by military-themed coins, organizations and groups, and national symbols. Sports and other causes made up the smallest percentages of introduced measures.

For more information on commemorative coins, see CRS In Focus IF10262, Commemorative Coins: An Overview, by Jacob R. Straus; and CRS Report R44623, Commemorative Coins: Background, Legislative Process, and Issues for Congress, by Jacob R. Straus.

Congressional Gold Medals

The Congressional Gold Medal is the “highest expression of national appreciation for distinguished achievements and contributions that the Congress can bestow upon one of our fellow citizens.” The first Congressional Gold Medal was awarded in 1776 to George Washington, and most of the early medals recognized military leaders. Today, Congressional Gold Medals have been awarded to a diverse group of individuals and groups, including individuals such as Sir Winston Churchill, Bob Hope, George Washington, Robert Frost, Joe Louis, and Mother Teresa of Calcutta; and groups such as Native American Code Talkers, the Montford Point Marines, and the Office of Strategic Services. Figure 13 shows two recent examples of Congressional Gold Medals, one for a group (USS Indianapolis sailors) and one for an individual (Stephen “Steve” Gleason).

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Figure 13. Examples of Congressional Gold Medals

| USS Indianapolis Congressional Gold Medal | Stephen Gleason Congressional Gold Medal |


In most Congresses, some Members introduce legislation to award Congressional Gold Medals and a few measures are enacted into law. Figure 14 shows the number of Congressional Gold Medal bills introduced and enacted from the 93rd through the 115th Congresses.

Figure 14. Congressional Gold Medal Legislation Introduced and Considered

93rd through 115th Congresses (1973-2018)

Source: Bush School of Government and Public Service and CRS data analysis of Congress.gov.

As shown in Figure 14, the number of Congressional Gold Medal measures introduced has varied since 1973, with as many as 56 measures introduced (115th Congress) and as few as zero (93rd Congress). The number of Congressional Gold Medal bills enacted per Congress has also
varied, with a low of zero in the 93rd and 94th Congresses and a high of nine in the 113th Congress. In total, 8% (48) of Congressional Gold Medal bills introduced were enacted into law.

For more information about Congressional Gold Medals, see CRS Report R45101, Congressional Gold Medals: Background, Legislative Process, and Issues for Congress, by Jacob R. Straus.

**Commemorative Works**

Commemorative works—memorials, monuments, and statues—honor important people, groups, and events. For much of American history, monuments and memorials were authorized in a piecemeal fashion, with no specific definition of what constituted a memorial or specified rules for the selection of site locations or memorial designs. In recent Congresses, legislation has been introduced to authorize commemorative works both inside and outside of the nation’s capital. Figure 15 shows an example of a memorial in the District of Columbia (the Eisenhower Memorial) and a memorial outside of Washington, DC (the National Memorial to Fallen Educators in Emporia, KS).46

**Figure 15. Examples of Memorials Established by Congress**

![Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial](https://eisenhowermemorial.gov/sites/all/themes/ember/img/memorial/banner_photo.jpg)  ![National Memorial to Fallen Educators](https://nthfmemorial.org)


**Commemorative Works in the District of Columbia**

Within the District of Columbia and its environs,47 the Commemorative Works Act of 1986 (CWA) statutorily defines memorials and provides specific standards for the consideration, siting, design, and building of memorials in areas administered by the National Park Service (NPS) and

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Additionally, some Members of Congress have frequently introduced legislation to authorize memorials on Department of Defense (DOD) controlled property. These can include Arlington National Cemetery, which is under the jurisdiction of the Department of the Army, and other properties such as the Pentagon or the Washington Navy Yard. DOD memorials are not covered by the CWA, but they are included in the dataset of memorials because legislation often authorizes their placement in the National Capital Region.

Legislation to establish a commemorative work in the District of Columbia, or on adjacent military controlled property is introduced nearly every Congress, but it is infrequently enacted. The greatest numbers of measures were introduced in the 95th and 99th Congresses (35 each), and the largest numbers of measures enacted were six in the 99th Congress, and five each in the 102nd, 103rd, and 113th Congresses. Figure 16 shows the numbers of introduced and enacted measures to authorize a commemorative work in the District of Columbia from the 93rd through the 115th Congresses.

Figure 16. Memorial Legislation in the District of Columbia
93rd through 115th Congresses (1973-2018)

As shown in Figure 16, the number of measures introduced to create a new memorial in the National Capital region has ranged from 35 in the 95th and 99th Congresses to 11 in the 104th Congress. The National Capital Region includes “the District of Columbia; Montgomery and Prince Georges Counties in Maryland; Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William Counties in Virginia; and all cities in Maryland and Virginia in the geographic area bounded by the outer boundaries of the combined area of the counties listed [above]....” 40 U.S.C. §8702.

48 40 U.S.C. §§8901-8909. For more information on the role of NCPC and CFA, see CRS Report R41658, Commemorative Works in the District of Columbia: Background and Practice, by Jacob R. Straus. For more information on memorial completed under the CWA, see CRS Report R43743, Monuments and Memorials Authorized and Completed Under the Commemorative Works Act in the District of Columbia, by Jacob R. Straus. For more information on memorials currently in-progress or that have lapsed authorizations, see CRS Report R43744, Monuments and Memorials Authorized Under the Commemorative Works Act in the District of Columbia: Current Development of In-Progress and Lapsed Works, by Jacob R. Straus.

49 The National Capital Region includes “the District of Columbia; Montgomery and Prince Georges Counties in Maryland; Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William Counties in Virginia; and all cities in Maryland and Virginia in the geographic area bounded by the outer boundaries of the combined area of the counties listed [above]....” 40 U.S.C. §8702.
Congress. The number of enacted measures has ranged from six in the 99th Congress to zero in the 104th and the 110th Congresses. Additionally, the CWA’s enactment does not appear to have had an effect on the number of measures introduced or enacted.


**Memorials Outside of DC**

The CWA does not govern congressional involvement in memorials outside of the District of Columbia. Instead, the process for creating or authorizing such memorials is largely based on whether the works are located on existing federal land and whether federal resources are utilized. Recently, Congress has handled the creation of memorials outside the District of Columbia in two ways: by directly authorizing a new commemorative or by making an existing commemorative a “national” memorial. **Figure 17** shows the number of introduced and enacted measures to authorize or designate a memorial outside the District of Columbia.

**Figure 17. Memorial Legislation Outside the District of Columbia**

*93rd through 115th Congresses (1973-2018)*

![Graph showing the number of introduced and enacted measures to authorize or designate a memorial outside the District of Columbia from 1973 to 2018.](image)

Source: Bush School of Government and Public Service and CRS data analysis of Congress.gov.

As shown in **Figure 17**, with the exception of the 105th Congress, legislation to recognize a national memorial outside of Washington, DC, has been introduced in every Congress from the 93rd through the 115th, with the most introduced in the 93rd Congress (29) and the fewest in the 110th Congress (5). Most Congresses also see legislation enacted to recognize or authorize a memorial outside of the District of Columbia, with the most enacted in the 100th Congress (eight) and the fewest in the 93rd, 105th, and the 110th Congress (zero each).
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**Commemorative Observances**

Each Congress, measures are introduced to recognize, support, honor, or acknowledge individuals, groups, and events (including anniversaries) with a national day, week, or month. This type of legislation can be divided into three categories: federal holidays; patriotic and national observances; and recognition of a specific day, week, or month for a specific individual, group, or event (including anniversaries).

**Federal Holidays**

The United States has 11 permanent federal holidays. These federal holidays are codified at 5 U.S.C. §6103 and are New Year’s Day, Martin Luther King Jr.’s Birthday, Inauguration Day (every four years, following a presidential election), George Washington’s Birthday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day, Veteran’s Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day. Although frequently called public or national days, these celebrations are only legally applicable to the federal government and the District of Columbia, as the states individually decide their own legal holidays. Recent proposed federal holidays include Juneteenth and Election Day.

The introduction and enactment of federal holiday measures is a relatively rare occasion in more recent Congresses. From the 93rd Congress through the 115th Congress, 128 bills were introduced to create a federal holiday. Of these bills, one was enacted—creating Martin Luther King Jr. Day in 1983.


**Patriotic and National Observances**

Since 1914, Congress has authorized 45 perpetual patriotic and national observances. The first of these observances recognized Mother’s Day and requested that the President issue an annual proclamation “on the second Sunday in May, as a public express of our love and reverence for the mothers of our country.”

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Codified in Title 36, *United States Code*, these patriotic and national observances include days for individuals, groups, events, and other commemorations. The creation of new patriotic and national observances requires the enactment of a law. In recent Congresses, for example, legislation has been introduced to designate March 29 as Vietnam Veterans Day to honor and recognize “the contributions of veterans who served in the United States Armed Forces in Vietnam during war and during peace.”

**Other Commemorative Time Periods**

In addition to statutory federal holidays and patriotic and national observances, Congress has historically considered legislation that recognizes, supports, honors, or acknowledges certain days, weeks, months, and anniversaries. For example, in the 115th Congress, the Senate agreed to a resolution “recognizing the month of October 2017 as Filipino American History Month.” Usually introduced as simple resolutions (H.Res. or S.Res.), these commemorative measures provide recognition by one congressional chamber of individuals, groups, and events without creating a new federal holiday or permanent patriotic and national observance.

Figure 18 shows the number of commemorative time period measures introduced and agreed to in both chambers. A total of 12,980 measures were introduced from the 93rd through the 115th Congresses, and 1,325 were agreed to in both chambers (H.Con.Res., S.Con.Res). Since the 104th Congress, House Rule XII, clause 5, has prohibited the introduction and consideration of date-specific commemorative legislation in the House (see “Commemorative Time Period Legislation in the House” below for more information). This rule only applies to the introduction and consideration of date-specific commemorative legislation in the House. Therefore, the rule might explain why the numbers of introduced and considered commemorative time period resolutions decline in Figure 18. The rule does not apply to the Senate. The rule’s adoption is indicated in Figure 18 with the dotted line.

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55 Patriotic and national observances that celebrate individuals include, for example, the Wright Brothers (§143), Leif Erikson (§114), and Stephen Foster (§140).

56 Patriotic and national observances that celebrate groups include, for example, Mother’s Day (§117) and Peace Officers (§136).

57 Patriotic and national observances that celebrate events include, for example, Patriot Day (9/11) (§144), Korean War Veterans Armistice Day (§127), and the signing of the Constitution (§106 and §108).

58 Patriotic and national observances that celebrate items include, for example, Flag Day (§110), Poison Prevention Week (§130), and Heart Month (§101).

59 S. 409 (113th Congress), introduced February 28, 2013.

60 S.Res. 305 (115th Congress), agreed to on October 25, 2017.

61 Simple resolutions can only be considered in the chamber in which they were introduced. Therefore, the Senate cannot act on a House resolution (H.Res.) and the House cannot act on a Senate resolution (S.Res.).
Figure 18. Title 36 and Other Time Period Commemorations
93rd through 115th Congresses (1973-2018)

As shown in Figure 18, the number of introduced measures has varied significantly since the 93rd Congress. Before the adoption of House Rule XII, clause 5, as many as 775 measures were introduced (99th Congress) and as few as 396 were introduced (96th Congress). After the rule’s adoption, as many as 1,047 measures were introduced (111th Congress) and as few as 81 measures were introduced (104th Congress). Prior to the rule’s adoption, the number of measures agreed to by both chambers tended to be higher in years when more measures were introduced, with the 99th Congress having the most adopted measures and the 94th having the fewest. After the rule, few measures were agreed to by both chambers, with as few as zero in the 112th and 113th Congresses and as many as 26 in the 109th Congress.

Commemorative Time Period Legislation in the House

In the 104th Congress (1995-1996), the House adopted a new standing rule to reduce the number of commemorative bills and resolutions introduced and considered by the chamber. House Rule XII, clause 5, prohibits the introduction and consideration of date-specific commemorative legislation. The House Majority Leader’s Legislative Protocols provide additional guidance to the majority leader when scheduling commemorative legislation. These protocols currently prohibit the majority leader from scheduling such legislation under “Suspension of the Rules” procedures.

Source: Bush School of Government and Public Service and CRS data analysis of Congress.gov.


63 U.S. Congress, House, Office of Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, “116th Congress Legislative Protocols,” at https://www.majorityleader.gov/content/116th-congress-legislative-protocols. Similar protocols have existed in previous Congresses. For example, from the 104th to the 109th and the 112th to the 115th Congresses, the Republican Party held the majority of seats in the House. During this time, consideration of commemorative legislation was also
Although the House prohibits the introduction and consideration of date-specific commemorative legislation, House resolutions to achieve a similar purpose continue to be introduced. CRS has observed that these resolutions generally do not include, in a measure’s resolved clause, a specific time period. Consequently, the introduction of such a measure, lacking a specific time period in the resolved clause, appears to be allowed in the House. Figure 19 shows the number of time period commemorations introduced and agreed to from the 93rd through the 115th Congresses in the House.

**Figure 19. Title 36 and Other Time Period Commemorations in the House**

93rd through 115th Congresses (1973-2018)

As shown in Figure 19, House Rule XII, clause 5 seemed to initially impact the number of measures agreed to. After the rule was adopted, the number of measures introduced and agreed to decreased to nearly zero in the 104th Congress before increasing through the 111th Congress. Beginning in the 112th Congress, while some measures were introduced, very few were agreed to. Since the 112th Congress, however, the number of measures introduced has again increased, but the number of measures agreed to remains near zero. Overall, the House agreed to approximately 26% of time period commemorative measures introduced from the 93rd through the 115th Congresses, with approximately 30% of introduced measures agreed to before the adoption of House Rule XII, clause 5 and approximately 22% of introduced measures agreed to after the rule’s adoption.

effectively governed by a rule of the House Republican Conference. Conference Rule 28(a)(6) generally prohibited the Republican leader from scheduling certain commemorative bills and resolutions for floor consideration under suspension of the rules. For those leadership protocols, issued November 1, 2016, see “Floor Protocols” at https://www.republicanleader.gov/protocols.

64 The resolving clause is the opening language of a resolution, beginning “Resolved, That the House of Representatives [Senate] ...” For more information, see Walter Kravitz, Congressional Quarterly’s American Congressional Dictionary, 3rd ed. (Washington: CQ Press, 2001), pp. 89, 217-218.

Commemorative Time Period Legislation in the Senate

Unlike in the House, no Senate rules prohibit the introduction or consideration of commemorative measures. Figure 20 shows the number of time period commemorations introduced and agreed to from the 93rd through the 115th Congresses in the Senate.

Figure 20. Title 36 and Other Time Period Commemorations in the Senate
93rd through 115th Congresses (1973-2018)

As shown in Figure 20, the number of measures introduced in the Senate has varied over time from a high of 439 in the 115th Congress to a low of 63 in the 104th Congress. The number of measures agreed to has also varied over time, from a high of 312 in the 115th Congress to a low of 24 in the 94th Congress. Overall, from the 93rd through the 115th Congresses, the Senate agreed to an average of 66% of all commemorative time period measures introduced.

For more information on legislation that designates a period of time, see CRS Report R44431, Commemorative Days, Weeks, and Months: Background and Current Practice, by Jacob R. Straus and Jared C. Nagel.

Observations and Conclusions

Many Members of Congress frequently introduce commemorative legislation. From the 93rd through the 115th Congresses, more than 18,000 measures were introduced and nearly 6,000 were enacted into law (S., H.R., S.J.Res, or H.J.Res.) or agreed to by the Senate (S.Res.), the House

In the past, the Senate Judiciary Committee has had unpublished guidelines on the consideration of commemorative legislation. These guidelines were not officially part of the committee’s rules. Past guidance restricted consideration of commemorative legislation without a minimum number of bipartisan cosponsors, and prohibited commemoration of specific categories. U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on the Judiciary, “Committee Policy for the Consideration of Commemorative Measures: 106th Congress (unpublished).” Categories for which the committee did not consider requests for commemorations included a commercial enterprise, industry, or specific product, or a fraternal, political, business, labor, or sectarian organization; a particular state or any political subdivision of a state, city, town, county, school, or institution of higher learning; or a living person.
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(H.Res.), or both (S.Con.Res. and H.Con.Res.). During this period, approximately 300,000 measures were introduced in the House and Senate, and nearly 31,000 were enacted into law or agreed to. Therefore, from the 93rd through the 115th Congresses, commemorative legislation made up approximately 6% of all introduced measures and about 19% of all enacted or agreed to legislation.

As a popular mechanism, commemorative legislation presents opportunities for Members of Congress to honor individuals, groups, and historic events in six different ways—naming federal buildings, authorizing postage stamps, issuing commemorative coins, awarding Congressional Gold Medals, establishing memorials and commemorative works, and recognizing a period of time. Some observers see time spent on commemorative measures as a way to respond to constituents and to honor important people, groups, events, and places. Others feel that congressional time spent on commemoratives is time that should be spent on policy matters.

In any event, the introduction and consideration of the six types of commemoratives identified in this report continues. This analysis presents data that may inform consideration of two interrelated questions: should Congress place limits on the introduction and consideration of commemorative legislation; and what role should Congress play in establishing a national collective memory?

Limits on Commemoratives

In 1994, the House of Representatives adopted a new rule to reduce the number of commemorative measures introduced and considered by the chamber. The rule (House Rule XII, clause 5) was adopted in part to address the perception that the House was spending too much time on date-specific commemorative measures rather than public policy. As Figure 19 shows, since the adoption of House Rule XII, clause 5, the number of commemorative measures introduced and considered in the House has varied, initially declining before trending upward again in recent Congresses. The rule does not apply to Senate consideration of legislation or to House consideration of non-date-specific legislation (e.g., building naming, postage stamps, commemorative coins, Congressional Gold Medals, and memorials).

The House adoption of Rule XII, clause 5, was neither the first time Congress proposed restricting commemorative legislation nor the only way that the House and Senate have limited the consideration of such legislation. During the mid-1960s, for example, several proposals were introduced to shift the responsibility of designating commemorative celebrations to a presidential commission. Twice the commission idea passed the House, but neither proposal was acted upon.

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by the Senate. Creating a presidential commission to decide when and how to commemorate a person, place, or event would have potentially reduced the number of measures introduced and considered by the House and Senate, theoretically freeing up floor time for public policy-related measures. However, allowing a presidentially appointed commission to be the sole arbiter of commemorations would have potentially removed one connection between Members’ representational duties and the interests of their constituents.

Several other congressional methods have been used to attempt to limit the number of commemorative measures introduced or considered. These include creating committee rules for legislative hearings, markups, or reporting; and creating party protocols to guide the scheduling of commemorative legislation by the House majority leader.

Committee Rules

Some congressional committees have adopted rules to guide the consideration of commemorative measures. For example, in the 114th Congress, the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform first adopted a provision to address the committee’s consideration of commemorative legislation. Committee Rule 13 states:

(a) Commemorative Stamps. The determination of the subject matter of commemorative stamps and new semi-postal issues is properly for consideration by the Postmaster General, and the Committee will not give consideration to legislative proposals specifying the subject matter of commemorative stamps and new semi-postal issues. It is suggested that recommendations for the subject matter of stamps be submitted to the Postmaster General.

(b) Postal Naming Bills. The consideration of bills designating facilities of the United States Postal Service shall be conducted so as to minimize the time spent on such matters by the Committee and the House.

(c) Resolutions. The Chair of the Committee shall not request to have scheduled any resolution for consideration under suspension of the Rules, which expresses appreciation, commends, congratulates, celebrates, recognizes the accomplishments of, or celebrates the anniversary of, an entity, event, group, individual, institution, team or government program; or acknowledges or recognizes a period of time for such purposes.

Similarly, the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works has a rule that limits the committee’s ability to consider or report naming a building for living person. Rule 7(d) states:

(d) Naming Public Facilities: The committee may not name a building, structure or facility for any living person, except former Presidents or former Vice Presidents of the United States, former Members of Congress over 70 years of age, former Justices of the United States Supreme Court over 70 years of age, or Federal judges who are fully retired and over 75 years of age or have taken senior status and are over 75 years of age.

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Congressional committees often serve as legislative gatekeepers for the thousands of measures introduced in any given Congress. In that role, committee rules help establish if and when certain types of measures might be considered by the committee. By establishing rules about commemorative legislation, relevant committees have signaled when such measures might advance through the legislative process, if at all. These rules, therefore, generally serve as a filter for legislation, limiting the committee’s ability to report a measure without meeting specified criteria, thus reducing the number of potential commemoratives that might be considered by the House or Senate.

Party Protocols

In recent Congresses, the Republican and Democratic parties in the House have adopted party rules or protocols to guide the scheduling of commemorative legislation by the House majority leader. From the 104th to the 109th and the 112th to the 115th Congresses, the Republican Party held the majority of seats in the House. During this time, consideration of commemorative legislation was also effectively governed by a rule of the House Republican Conference. Conference Rule 28(a)(6) generally prohibited the Republican leader from scheduling certain commemorative bills and resolutions for floor consideration under suspension of the rules. Although party rules are not enforceable by points of order on the House floor, the rule arguably reflected a reluctance on the part of the majority party during this period to schedule any legislation with commemorative intent. The Democratic Party, which holds the majority of House seats in the 116th Congress and therefore is responsible for scheduling floor action, has also instituted protocols for the scheduling of commemorative legislation. The majority leader’s protocols for the 116th Congress state that

the Majority Leader shall not schedule any bill or resolution for consideration that expresses appreciation, commends, congratulates, celebrates, recognizes the accomplishments of, or celebrates the anniversary of, an entity, event, group, individual, institution, team or government program; or acknowledges or recognizes a period of time.

Additionally, the Democratic Party’s protocols for the 116th Congress provide that the House majority leader “shall consider” the first three Congressional Gold Medal bills and the first three commemorative coin bills reported by the House Financial Services Committee that have


77 U.S. Congress, House Republican Conference, “Conference Rules.” In the 116th Congress, this is Rule 29(a)(6) of the party conference rules. See https://www.gop.gov/conference-rules-of-the-116th-congress/. Another portion of the rule allowed a waiver to be granted by a majority of the party’s elected leadership.

78 While in the majority, the House Republican Conference also issued leadership protocols “intended to guide the majority leadership in the scheduling and consideration of legislation on the House floor,” indicating that a “resolution of bereavement, or condemnation, or which calls on others (such as a foreign government) to take a particular action, but which does not otherwise violate the provisions of [Republican Conference] Rule 28 is eligible to be scheduled under suspension of the Rules.” For those leadership protocols, issued November 1, 2016, see “Floor Protocols” at https://www.republicanleader.gov/protocols.

79 U.S. Congress, House, Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, “116th Congress Legislative Protocols,” at https://www.majorityleader.gov/content/116th-congress-legislative-protocols. However, the protocols also state that a “resolution on condemnation, or which calls on others to take a particular action, is eligible to be scheduled for consideration.”
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This protocol effectively signals that the first three gold medal or commemorative coin measures that meet the two-thirds cosponsorship threshold and are reported by the committee must be scheduled. Whether or not additional measures are scheduled appears to be up to the majority leader.

Party rules and protocols signal the party’s intent on how the House should handle commemorative legislation. By placing restrictions on the majority leader’s ability to handle certain types of legislation, the party potentially limits the number of measures considered.

Congress and National Collective Memory

Commemoration “encompasses all the various ways people have imagined—in monuments, ceremonies, festivals, pageants, fairs, museums, reenactment, and more—to conjure deep regard for the past.” Since the Continental Congress authorized an equestrian statue of George Washington, Congress has been involved in the recognition of individual and group contributions to the shared American experience through commemorations. As a result, Congress has arguably become an arbiter of what is worthy of national commemoration through the introduction, consideration, and passage of legislation to honor individuals, groups, events, and places.

The extent to which Congress should be involved in commemoration is a long-standing discussion. As shown above, some Members of Congress have advocated that Congress should play a larger role in commemorating American people, events, and concepts, whereas others believe that Congress should focus primarily on public policy rather than commemorations, many of which may be of narrow interest to most Americans. As the national policymaking body, however, Congress is in a unique position to influence public sentiment. For example, in establishing the National Mall and declaring it a completed work of civic art, Congress has set aside a permanent place where one observer has suggested “the nation’s soul is embedded” and where American ideals can be communicated in more than words.

Not all commemoratives have the lasting influence of the National Mall. Some are enduring, such as those established by law (e.g., naming federal buildings, authorizing postage stamps, issuing commemorative coins, awarding Congressional Gold Medals, establishing memorials, and recognizing federal holidays or patriotic and national observances). These enduring commemorations can appeal to either broader (e.g., federal holidays) or narrower (e.g., naming...
public buildings) groups and can rhetorically serve as civics lessons. Others—like legislatively recognizing a commemorative day, week, or month—are temporary recognitions, only applying to a specific day, month, or year rather than establishing a permanent, automatically repeating recognition. No matter the path that Congress chooses, however, the mere fact that Congress acts has meaning.

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Appendix. Detailed Methodology

As initially discussed under “Methodology” above and shown in Figure 1, this appendix contains details on the search strategies used by the Bush School of Government and Public Service and CRS to construct the commemorative legislation dataset used in this report. To identify commemorative legislation, searches were conducted using the available information on all legislative measures on Congress.gov from the 93rd (1973-1974) through the 115th (2017-2018) Congresses. From the 93rd through the 100th (1987-1988) Congresses, the only available information in Congress.gov on all legislative measures is summaries of the measures (including the titles). Beginning in the 101st Congress (1989-1990), full bill text searches are available on Congress.gov. For measures introduced from the 101st through the 115th Congress, searches were conducted using both summaries and full text.

**Naming Federal Buildings**

In general, a law is required to rename a federal facility, including a federal building. Within Congress.gov, there are a variety of ways that building naming legislation is described. The federal building naming legislation included in this report was identified through searches for terms such as “designate the facility,” “designate the,” and “name the.” The searches were structured to collect legislation on naming federal buildings, including courthouses, post offices, veterans’ hospitals, and other federal facilities. Occasionally, the searches turned up legislation that named dams, highways, bridges, and other structures. These were excluded from the dataset because they were relatively infrequent and were not clearly focused on federal facilities.

**Postage Stamps**

Commemorative postage stamp legislation often suggests themes to the United States Postal Service or authorizes a “semipostal” stamp (i.e., fundraising). Legislation for postage stamps was identified by searching Congress.gov using the search terms “postage stamp” and “semipostal.” The dataset includes legislation that would have authorized commemorative postage stamps but excludes measures that addressed postal service operations, costs, revenue, or post office namings. Post office naming legislation is included in the building-naming dataset.

**Commemorative Coins**

Commemorative coins honor individuals and groups with a noncirculating, numismatic product. Legislation was identified by searching Congress.gov using the term “commemorative coin.” Using the term “commemorative coin” provided a precise dataset that excluded legislation to create or extend circulating coin programs or legislation that would make changes to coin or paper money design features.

**Congressional Gold Medals**

Congressional Gold Medals are the highest award bestowed by Congress. Legislation was identified by searching Congress.gov using the term “congressional gold medal.” Using this search term excluded other types of medals, including military medals.

**Memorials and Commemorative Works**

Data on memorials and commemorative works both inside the District of Columbia and elsewhere in the United States were identified in Congress.gov using the search terms “monument” and “memorial.” In an attempt to specifically focus on memorials, legislation to authorize artwork in the U.S. Capitol was excluded.

**Commemorative Observances**
Commemorative observances take three general forms: federal holidays; patriotic and national observances (codified in Title 36 United States Code); and the recognition of a specific time period by the House, the Senate, or both. The federal holiday data were collected by searching Congress.gov for the term “federal holiday.” The other commemorative time periods category within the report includes results from a search for the terms “day,” “week,” “month,” and “anniversary.” Legislation that would create a patriotic or national observance was compiled using the same search terms as other commemorative time periods, but limiting legislative vehicles to bills or joint resolutions, since creating a Title 36 observance requires the enactment of a law. Additionally, CRS searched Congress.gov using search terms such as “Title 36,” “amend*” and “36 U.S.C.”

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A “*” symbol is used in Congress.gov to find variations of a term. For example, “amend*” would search for “amendment,” “amends,” and other variations of the term “amend.” For details on searching Congress.gov, see https://www.congress.gov/help/search-intro.