

NEWS & NOTES *continued*

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

# Milestone Mission

*Proposed bill acknowledges Apollo 11's 50th anniversary with four commemorative coins.*

➤ ON JULY 20, 1969, Apollo 11 astronauts Neil Armstrong and Edwin “Buzz” Aldrin became the first humans to land on the moon. Fulfilling a goal set by President John F. Kennedy in 1961, this event was a major triumph of American technological and scientific ingenuity, and was an achievement of great significance, not just to Americans, but to people all over the world.

Astronomy and space are popular themes for coin collectors, and numerous pieces issued by world mints over the years have honored Apollo 11. However, no United States coin, apart from the reverses of the Eisenhower and Susan B. Anthony dollars that allude to the lunar landing, has specifi-

cally featured the famous milestone.

Last year, Representative Bill Posey (R-Florida) introduced a bipartisan bill (H.R. 2726) that seeks to fill this void with the issuance of an innovative four-coin program in 2019 to mark the moon landing's 50th anniversary. The proposed program includes a silver dollar, copper-nickel-clad half dollar, and gold \$5, plus something the U.S. Mint has never issued: a cup-shaped 5-ounce proof silver dollar. In fact, all four pieces will feature a convex reverse (to resemble an astronaut's faceplate), with a design based on the famous photo of Aldrin on the moon. The obverse motif will be selected through a competition, which historically has resulted in successful coin designs.

The legislation also indicates that the coins “should be produced with the [reverse design] continuing over what would otherwise be the edge of the coins, such that the reverse design extends all the way to the obverse.” This would be another first for the mint.

Once all the costs associated with the coins' production are recouped, surcharges from their sale will go to a number of organizations. Recipients will include the Smithsonian Institution's Air and Space Museum's “Destination Moon” exhibit; the Astronaut Memorial Foundation; and the Astronaut Scholarship Foundation.

The legislation, introduced in the House of Representatives on June 10, 2015, had 104 co-sponsors as of May 12. So far, the majority of sponsors come from states that played a major role in the space program, such as Florida, Texas, California and Alabama. However, unless the bill obtains 290 co-sponsors and passes both the U.S. House and Senate by the end of 2016, it will expire. It would then be necessary to start over in 2017, and the current momentum could easily be lost. So far, there is no companion Senate bill, but people involved in the effort say it could happen soon.

The program appears to have strong support in the numismatic community, but those working to make it a reality say it is imperative that collectors ask their representatives to support the bill as soon as possible, especially now that interest is building in Congress. Almost every state played some role in the space program. Collectors are advised to research the contributions made by their states and share them with their representatives, as well as why they think the coins should be issued.

Supporters also note that it will be a fitting and long overdue tribute to a major American achievement. The coins likely will have considerable crossover appeal for non-collectors who care about the space program and astronomy, and that could lead to new hobbyists.

—Louis Golino ■



▲ Although the reverses of the 1971-78 Eisenhower dollar (represented at the top by a 1976 Bicentennial specimen) and the 1979-99 Susan B. Anthony dollar (bottom) allude to the Apollo 11 mission, no U.S. coin has depicted the historic event. The proposed reverse design of the commemorative proofs is inspired by the famous photo of Buzz Aldrin on the moon's surface, while the obverse will be selected through a competition.

Not Actual Size