

Greg LeMond Expected to Receive Congressional Gold Medal Next Week

It could be another first for cycling legend Greg LeMond.

On Sunday, [Greg LeMond](#) is expected to become America's 10th individual athlete – and the first cyclist – to receive the Congressional Gold Medal, one of the nation's highest civilian honors.

LeMond was the first American to win the [Tour de France](#) in 1986. Following the subsequent disqualifications of [Lance Armstrong](#) and [Floyd Landis](#), LeMond stands as America's only official Tour champion.

The congressional medal stands for more than LeMond's first historic Tour victory. A year later, he nearly died in a hunting accident in California when he was accidentally shot. Two years later, he completed an unprecedented comeback, defeating French legend [Laurent Fignon](#) on the final day of the 1989 Tour to secure his second yellow jersey. LeMond's eight-second margin remains [the closest winning difference in Tour history](#).

The text of the Greg LeMond Congressional Gold Medal Act lists several other accomplishments that populate his résumé as an American hero: the youngest cyclist to be selected for a men's Olympic team; the first American to win a pro-am cycling event in Europe; and an outspoken critic of doping in cycling.

"His victories put the United States on the world cycling map," said U.S. Rep. Mike Thompson of California, author of the legislation. "I hope that by awarding him the Congressional Gold Medal, we will help to spread his story across our nation and get more people out riding their bikes and enjoying this incredible sport."

Among civilian honors, only the Presidential Medal of Freedom rivals the Congressional Gold for prestige. Thompson [introduced the legislation](#) in June 2019. Its successful passage required a super-majority of votes, two-thirds of the House and two-thirds of the Senate – a high bar.

[LeMond greeted the measure with disbelief](#), telling *VeloNews* last year he thought the medal was "for war veterans."

But [Congress loves bicycles](#), and it loves LeMond. The medal cleared the House in September 2019, and the Senate on November 16. On November 24, 2020, the measure passed to President Donald Trump, triggering a 10-day countdown for him to sign the bill, veto it or do nothing. A veto seems unlikely. If POTUS does nothing, the bill becomes law at the end of December 5.

Passage will likely trigger a wave of press coverage, planting LeMond in the national news. Perhaps Thompson's efforts will finally elevate LeMond to the front rank of American sports legends. This is a watershed event, not only for LeMond but also for American cycling in general.

Written by Daniel de Vise, December 1st, 2020. Daniel is an [occasional contributor](#) to The Outer Line, and the author of The Comeback: Greg LeMond, the True King of American Cycling, and a Legendary Tour de France. Rep. Thompson cites the book as inspiration for LeMond's medal.