

NEWS

Paul Tsongas CONGRESSMAN

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Rep. Tsongas to Present Commemorative Coins to African Leaders

Rep. Paul Tsongas (D.-Mass.) will present bicentennial coins from the towns of Lexington and Concord to the heads of state of Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan during his visit to those countries this week.

Rep. Tsongas left on a 12-day fact finding tour of Ethiopia and Somalia -- two nations at war -- and the Sudan on December 9. The tour includes a return to the small Ethiopian village of Wolisso where the Congressman served in the Peace Corps.

Rep. Tsongas, whose district includes the historic towns of Lexington and Concord, selected the bicentennial coins because they symbolize America's colonial heritage and the Fifth District's historical significance.

"What happened in Lexington and Concord is the most important incident in our history," said Congressman Tsongas. "I want the leaders of these countries to be aware that our nation also has a colonial past."

Both coins are the official bicentennial medals for each town. The Lexington medal has the town seal (the Minuteman statue) on its face, and the reverse depicts Paul Revere's ride through Lexington. It is vermeil -- gold on a sterling silver core.

The Concord coin has the North Bridge on its front and the Concord Minuteman on its back. It is made of sterling silver.

In meeting with leaders and people in the three countries, the Congressman hopes to assess the shift in the balance of power in the Horn of Africa. Ethiopia and Somalia have recently shifted big power alliances, and the Congressman's aim is to recommend future diplomatic relationships and aid policies.

Rep. Tsongas has spoken out on the floor of Congress against reducing foreign aid to emerging African nations disagreeing with the U.S.

He is accompanied on the trip by Rep. Don Bonker (D.-Wash.) and officials of the U.S. State Department.

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