

Underground Railroad leader Harriet Tubman to appear on U.S. \$20 bill

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Word Count **527**



Concept art of Harriet Tubman on the \$20 bill. Photo: Courtesy Women on 20s/TNS

The U.S. Treasury has decided to put African American abolitionist Harriet Tubman on the front of the new \$20 bill, replacing former president Andrew Jackson. Tubman was an important activist in the 1800s who helped dozens of slaves escape to freedom through a network of abolitionists and safe houses known as the Underground Railroad. The Treasury also decided to keep former Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton on the front of the new \$10 bill. The Treasury faced fierce opposition to its initial plan to replace the founding father with a woman.

Treasury Secretary Jack Lew will announce decisions regarding several bills on Wednesday. The Treasury Department hopes to release the designs for the new bills by 2020. The year will mark the 100th anniversary of women gaining the right to vote in the United States.

Treasury Reconsidered Removal Of Hamilton

CNN reported April 16 that the soonest the new \$20 bill would be issued is 2030. The news prompted a backlash on Twitter. Supporters of the campaign to put a woman on a bill argue that women have waited long enough. However, a Treasury spokesman disputed CNN's report, saying that the Treasury is working with other government departments to speed up the process, and it's too early to say when the release date will be.

Lew announced in June 2015 that the Treasury was considering removing Hamilton from the \$10 bill to allow a woman to appear on it. The last time a woman was featured on the front of a paper note was when Martha Washington graced the \$1 silver certificate in the 1800s. The \$10 bill was already slated for a redesign in 2020. The bills are regularly reworked to prevent thieves from making copies.

Tubman Received The Most Votes

The Treasury was moved in part by a viral campaign in early 2015 to put a woman's portrait on the new \$20 bill in 2020 to celebrate the anniversary of women gaining the right to vote. The group "Women on \$20s" received more than 600,000 online and in-person votes for a choice of 15 American women. Among the choices were Rosa Parks, a civil rights leader, and Eleanor Roosevelt, a former first lady and activist. Tubman received the most votes.

But the Treasury's announcement drew a backlash from supporters of Hamilton, who served as an aide to George Washington and as the first secretary of the treasury. The founding father helped build the U.S. economic and banking system. Hamilton has gained fame in recent years due to the success of Lin-Manuel Miranda's Broadway play. Earlier this week, the musical won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama.

Supporters Approved Of Choice Of Tubman

The debate sparked a grass-roots movement to instead remove Jackson from the \$20 bill. The former president was a slave owner responsible for removing several Native American tribes from their lands in the South. Some point out that Jackson also opposed paper currency, in favor of gold and silver.

Supporters greeted the choice of Tubman, an iconic abolitionist. "A woman, a leader and a freedom fighter. I can't think of a better choice for the \$20 bill than Harriet Tubman," Hillary Clinton wrote on Twitter.

Quiz

- 1 Which of the following answer choices would BEST describe people's initial reaction to replacing Hamilton with a woman on the \$20 bill?
- (A) People pledged to boycott using the new \$20 bill.
 - (B) People reacted strongly in positive and negative ways to the new bill proposal.
 - (C) People were wary about the change since they did not trust the government.
 - (D) People were apathetic and had no interest in the bill change.

- 2 In the first paragraph, Harriet Tubman is introduced in what way?
- (A) by comparing her accomplishments to Martha Washington's
 - (B) by sharing an interesting anecdote about her
 - (C) by providing historical information about what she did
 - (D) by quoting some things she said about the Underground Railroad

- 3 Read the following sentence.

The \$10 bill was already slated for a redesign in 2020.

Which of the following answer choices would be the BEST replacement for the word "slated?"

- (A) scheduled
- (B) recommended
- (C) approved
- (D) questioned

- 4 Read the following sentence.

But the Treasury's announcement drew a backlash from supporters of Hamilton, who served as an aide to George Washington and as the first secretary of the treasury.

Which of the following answer choices BEST explains the meaning of the word "backlash" as it is used here?

- (A) strong opposition
- (B) violent outburst
- (C) joyous celebration
- (D) positive reaction

Answer Key

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