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Liberty Medal presented to Dalai Lama's representatives

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PHILADELPHIA (AP) — The Liberty Medal has been presented to representatives of the Dalai Lama in recognition of his efforts to promote compassion and human rights around the world.

The Tibetan spiritual leader was chosen in June to receive the award, which comes with a \$100,000 cash prize, but canceled his appearance at the Philadelphia ceremony on Monday evening for health reasons.

At the National Constitution Center ceremony, actor Richard Gere called the Dalai Lama "one of the great ones" who "wants nothing more than our happiness, which is ultimately us understanding the nature of things and how deeply interconnected we all are."

The Dalai Lama said in a video statement that he regretted not being able to attend and considered himself a "simple Buddhist monk, no more, no less." He said he was "deeply touched" by recognition of "my little service to humanity."

"Mainly, I (am) fully committed until my death (to) promotion of human value ... including freedom, liberty," he said.

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Center CEO Jeffrey Rosen said in announcing the award that the Tibetan spiritual leader has "emphasized the ideals of freedom, dialogue and tolerance."

The 80-year-old Dalai Lama, who received a Nobel Peace Prize in 1989, has lived in exile in India since a failed 1959 Tibetan uprising against Chinese rule.

In September, the Dalai Lama's office said he had canceled planned U.S. appearances after doctors at Minnesota's Mayo Clinic advised him to rest. Upon his return to the Tibetan government-in-exile's headquarters in Dharamsala, in northern India, this month he assured followers he was in excellent health but his doctors had advised him to "take precaution." He gave no further details.

The Liberty Medal is given annually by the Constitution Center to those who strive to secure liberty for people worldwide. Previous winners include Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai and rock singer and humanitarian Bono.

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