

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 633

To award a Congressional Gold Medal to the members of the Women's Army Corps who were assigned to the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion, known as the "Six Triple Eight".

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

FEBRUARY 28, 2019

Mr. MORAN (for himself, Mr. ROBERTS, Mr. ROUNDS, Ms. ROSEN, Mr. WICKER, Mrs. HYDE-SMITH, and Mr. TILLIS) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs

A BILL

To award a Congressional Gold Medal to the members of the Women's Army Corps who were assigned to the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion, known as the "Six Triple Eight".

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the "Six Triple Eight' Con-
5 gressional Gold Medal Act of 2019".

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) On July 1, 1943, President Franklin D.
2 Roosevelt signed into law legislation that established
3 the Women’s Army Corps (referred to in this section
4 as the “WAC”) as a component in the Army. The
5 WAC was converted from the Women’s Army Auxil-
6 iary Corps (referred to in this section as the
7 “WAAC”), which had been created in 1942 without
8 official military status. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt
9 and Mary McLeod Bethune, the founder of the Na-
10 tional Council of Negro Women, advocated for the
11 admittance of African-American women into the
12 newly formed WAC to serve as officers and enlisted
13 personnel.

14 (2) Dubbed “10 percenters”, the recruitment of
15 African-American women to the WAAC was limited
16 to 10 percent of the population of the WAAC to
17 match the proportion of African-Americans in the
18 national population. Despite an executive order
19 issued by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1941
20 banning racial discrimination in civilian defense in-
21 dustries, the Armed Forces remained segregated.
22 Enlisted women served in segregated units, partici-
23 pated in segregated training, lived in separate quar-
24 ters, ate at separate tables in mess halls, and used
25 segregated recreational facilities. Officers received

1 their officer candidate training in integrated units
2 but lived under segregated conditions. Specialist and
3 technical training schools were integrated in 1943.
4 During World War II, a total of 6,520 African-
5 American women served in the WAAC and the
6 WAC.

7 (3) After several units of White women were
8 sent to serve in the European theater of operations
9 (referred to in this section as the “ETO”) during
10 World War II, African-American organizations advo-
11 cated for the War Department to extend the oppor-
12 tunity to serve overseas to African-American WAC
13 units.

14 (4) In November 1944, the War Department
15 approved sending African-American women to serve
16 in Europe. A battalion of all African-American
17 women drawn from the WAC, the Army Service
18 Forces, and the Army Air Forces was created and
19 designated as the 6888th Central Postal Directory
20 Battalion (referred to in this section as the
21 “6888th”), which was nicknamed the “Six Triple
22 Eight”.

23 (5) Army officials reported a shortage of quali-
24 fied postal officers within the ETO, which resulted
25 in a backlog of undelivered mail. As Allied forces

1 drove across Europe, the ever-changing locations of
2 servicemembers hampered the delivery of mail to
3 those servicemembers. Because 7,000,000 individ-
4 uals from the United States were serving in the
5 ETO, many of those individuals had identical names.
6 As an example, 7,500 such individuals were named
7 Robert Smith. One general predicted that the back-
8 log in Birmingham, England would take 6 months to
9 process and the lack of reliable mail service was
10 hurting morale.

11 (6) In May 1945, the 6888th arrived in Bir-
12 mingham. Upon their arrival, the 6888th found
13 warehouses filled with millions of pieces of mail in-
14 tended for members of the Armed Forces, United
15 States Government personnel, and Red Cross work-
16 ers serving in the ETO.

17 (7) The 6888th created effective processes and
18 filing systems to track individual servicemembers,
19 organize “undeliverable” mail, determine the in-
20 tended recipient for insufficiently addressed mail,
21 and handle mail addressed to servicemembers who
22 had died. Adhering to their motto of “No mail, low
23 morale”, the women processed an average of 65,000
24 pieces of mail per shift and cleared the 6-month
25 backlog of mail within 3 months.

1 (8) The 6888th traveled to Rouen, France later
2 in May 1945 and worked through a separate backlog
3 of undelivered mail dating back as far as 3 years.

4 (9) At the completion of their mission, the en-
5 tire unit returned to the United States. The 6888th
6 was discontinued on March 9, 1946, at Fort Dix,
7 New Jersey.

8 (10) The accomplishments of the 6888th in Eu-
9 rope encouraged the General Board, United States
10 Forces, European Theater of Operations to adopt
11 the following premise in their study of the WAC
12 issued in December 1945: “[T]he national security
13 program is the joint responsibility of all Americans
14 irrespective of color or sex” and “the continued use
15 of colored, along with white, female military per-
16 sonnel is required in such strength as is proportion-
17 ately appropriate to the relative population distribu-
18 tion between colored and white races”.

19 (11) With the exception of smaller units of Af-
20 rican-American nurses who served in Africa, Aus-
21 tralia, and England, the 6888th was the only Afri-
22 can-American women’s unit to serve overseas during
23 World War II.

24 (12) The members of the “Six Triple Eight” re-
25 ceived the European African Middle Eastern Cam-

1 paign Medal, the Women’s Army Corps Service
2 Medal, and the World War II Victory Medal for
3 their service.

4 **SEC. 3. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

5 (a) AWARD AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of the
6 House of Representatives and the President pro tempore
7 of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements for the
8 award, on behalf of Congress, of a single gold medal of
9 appropriate design in honor of the women of the 6888th
10 Central Postal Directory Battalion (commonly known as
11 the “Six Triple Eight”) in recognition of—

12 (1) the pioneering military service of those
13 women;

14 (2) the devotion to duty of those women; and

15 (3) the contributions made by those women to
16 increase the morale of all United States personnel
17 stationed in the European theater of operations dur-
18 ing World War II.

19 (b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For the purposes of the
20 award described in subsection (a), the Secretary of the
21 Treasury (referred to in this Act as the “Secretary”) shall
22 strike the gold medal with suitable emblems, devices, and
23 inscriptions, to be determined by the Secretary.

24 (c) SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—After the award of the gold
2 medal under subsection (a), the medal shall be given
3 to the Smithsonian Institution, where the medal
4 shall be available for display, as appropriate, and
5 made available for research.

6 (2) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of
7 Congress that the Smithsonian Institution should
8 make the gold medal received under paragraph (1)
9 available elsewhere, particularly at—

10 (A) appropriate locations associated with
11 the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion;

12 (B) the Women in Military Service for
13 America Memorial;

14 (C) the United States Army Women’s Mu-
15 seum;

16 (D) the National World War II Museum
17 and Memorial; and

18 (E) any other location determined appro-
19 priate by the Smithsonian Institution.

20 **SEC. 4. DUPLICATE MEDALS.**

21 Under such regulations as the Secretary may pre-
22 scribe, the Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in
23 bronze of the gold medal struck under section 3 at a price
24 sufficient to cover the costs of the medals, including labor,
25 materials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses.

1 **SEC. 5. NATIONAL MEDALS.**

2 (a) NATIONAL MEDALS.—Medals struck under this
3 Act are national medals for purposes of chapter 51 of title
4 31, United States Code.

5 (b) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of section
6 5134 of title 31, United States Code, all medals struck
7 under this Act shall be considered to be numismatic items.

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