

117TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# H. R. 7759

To award a Congressional Gold Medal, collectively, to the brave women who served in World War II as members of the U.S. Army Nurse Corps and U.S. Navy Nurse Corps.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 12, 2022

Ms. STEFANIK (for herself and Mr. BROWN of Maryland) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Financial Services, and in addition to the Committee on House Administration, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

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## A BILL

To award a Congressional Gold Medal, collectively, to the brave women who served in World War II as members of the U.S. Army Nurse Corps and U.S. Navy Nurse Corps.

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 “WWII Nurses Con-  
5 gressional Gold Medal Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

2 The Congress finds the following:

3 (1) On December 8, 1941, the United States  
4 declared war against the Empire of Japan, followed  
5 by declarations of war against Germany and Italy on  
6 December 11, 1941. In 1935, there were fewer than  
7 600 U.S. Army Nurses and 1,700 U.S. Navy Nurses  
8 on active duty. By the time World War II ended,  
9 more than 59,000 Army Nurses and 14,000 Navy  
10 Nurses had volunteered to serve.

11 (2) The Army Reorganization Act of 1920  
12 granted women in the Nurse Corps “relative rank”.  
13 This gave them the right to wear the military insignia,  
14 but did not confer military status or privileges.  
15 This arrangement meant women serving throughout  
16 WWII received 50 percent of the pay as compared  
17 to their male counterparts, and none of the veteran  
18 benefits. Because they did not receive military status,  
19 they received no orientation or training before  
20 being deployed to hospitals near the frontlines.

21 (3) Nurses served under fire in field hospitals  
22 and evacuation hospitals across six continents, on  
23 hospital trains and ships, and as flight nurses on  
24 medical transport planes. Several nurses were killed  
25 in action when their ships were torpedoed or field  
26 hospitals were bombed. Some even entered into com-

1 bat areas as flight nurses to retrieve the wounded,  
2 and 2 groups were captured as prisoners of war by  
3 the Japanese.

4 (4) General Douglas MacArthur ordered Army  
5 Nurses to the Bataan Peninsula to prepare 2 emer-  
6 gency hospitals for U.S. and Filipino forces. General  
7 Hospital 1 received casualties directly from the front  
8 lines, and more than 1,200 battle casualties requir-  
9 ing major surgery were admitted within a month.  
10 General Hospital 2 accepted patients strong enough  
11 for evacuation, as it was out in the open, with no  
12 tents or buildings, and only tree canopy to conceal  
13 them from Japanese aircraft. Hospital 1 was  
14 bombed on March 29, 1942, killing or wounding  
15 more than 100 patients, but the nurses carried on  
16 with their duties as well as they were able. Following  
17 the U.S. Army surrender of the Philippines to the  
18 Japanese on May 6, 1942, 67 Army Nurses were  
19 taken to Santo Tomas Internment Camp in Manila,  
20 where they remained until February 1945. During  
21 the 37 months in captivity, these women endured  
22 primitive conditions and starvation rations, but con-  
23 tinued to care for the ill and injured in the intern-  
24 ment camp hospital.

1           (5) Early in the morning of November 8, 1942,  
2       60 nurses attached to the 48th Surgical Hospital  
3       landed off the coast of North Africa. The nurses  
4       wore helmets and carried full packs containing med-  
5       ical equipment. Without weapons, they waded ashore  
6       amid enemy sniper fire and ultimately took shelter  
7       in an abandoned civilian hospital, where they began  
8       caring for invasion casualties. There was no elec-  
9       tricity or running water, and the only medical sup-  
10      plies available were those the nurses had brought  
11      themselves.

12           (6) In Anzio, Italy, nurses dug foxholes outside  
13      their tents or under their cots and cared for patients  
14      under German shellfire. The field hospital tents were  
15      marked by large red crosses and were sometimes de-  
16      liberately hit with artillery shells and bombs. On  
17      February 7, 1944, a German pilot being pursued by  
18      British fighter planes dropped 5 antipersonnel  
19      bombs on the hospital, destroying 29 ward tents,  
20      killing 26 and wounding 64. The dead included 3  
21      nurses, 2 medical officers, a Red Cross worker, 14  
22      enlisted men and 6 patients. Troops came to refer  
23      to the hospital area as “Hell’s Half-Acre” because it  
24      was hit so frequently by enemy fire. At least 200

1 nurses took part in the Anzio campaign, caring for  
2 more than 33,000 patients behind enemy lines.

3 (7) Enlisted nurses acclimated quickly to dif-  
4 ficult and dangerous conditions with a minimum of  
5 complaints, and were essential members of the field  
6 armies.

7 (8) The presence of nurses at the front im-  
8 proved morale because soldiers realized that they  
9 would receive skilled care in the event they were  
10 wounded.

11 (9) Thanks largely to the efforts of these  
12 nurses, fewer than 4 percent of the American sol-  
13 diers who received medical care in the field or under-  
14 went evacuation died from wounds or disease.

15 (10) After the war, broad public health mis-  
16 sions required that enlisted nurses supervise commu-  
17 nicable disease measures as former enemy countries  
18 were reorganized. In Hiroshima, these officers cared  
19 for victims of the atomic bombs. In Munich, they  
20 prevented mass epidemic in refugee camps. Enlisted  
21 nurses even provided prenatal, infant, and mental  
22 health care in other former-enemy territories.

23 (11) Nurses received 1,619 medals, citations,  
24 and commendations during the war, reflecting the  
25 courage and dedication of all who served. Sixteen

1 medals were awarded posthumously to nurses who  
2 died as a result of enemy fire, including 6 nurses  
3 who died at Anzio, 6 who died when the Hospital  
4 Ship Comfort was attacked by a Japanese suicide  
5 plane, and 4 flight nurses. Thirteen other flight  
6 nurses died in weather-related crashes while on duty.

7 (12) In 1944, Congress passed a bill that  
8 granted Army and Navy Nurses actual military rank  
9 and benefits, approved for the duration of the war  
10 plus 6 months.

11 (13) In 1947, Congress passed legislation estab-  
12 lishing a permanent Army and Navy Nursing Corps  
13 and gave members permanent officer status with  
14 equal pay and the same benefits as those given to  
15 male officers.

16 (14) In 1948, all military branches were inte-  
17 grated and female doctors were finally admitted to  
18 the Army Medical Corps.

19 (15) Although African-American Nurses were  
20 fully qualified and prepared to serve as nurses at the  
21 onset of World War II, racial segregation and dis-  
22 crimination made it difficult for Black women to join  
23 the ranks of the Army Nurse Corps (referred to in  
24 this Act as the “ANC”).

1           (16) As the ANC began expanding its recruit-  
2           ing process, thousands of Black nurses who wanted  
3           to serve their country filled out applications.

4           (17) While the Army did eventually integrate  
5           African-American Nurses in 1941, it did so  
6           unwillingly and placed a quota on the number of Af-  
7           rican-American Nurses that they would accept, cap-  
8           ping the number allowed to join at 56.

9           (18) Many of them had hardship tours and  
10          were sent to segregated camps to take care of Afri-  
11          can-American Soldiers and would rotate and allow  
12          White nurses reprieve in taking care of German  
13          POWs. As the war progressed, the number of Black  
14          nurses allowed to enlist remained low, although the  
15          quota was officially lifted in July 1944.

16          (19) The extraordinary efforts of these women  
17          are deserving of belated official recognition.

18          (20) The United States is eternally grateful to  
19          the nurses of the Army and Navy Nurse Corps for  
20          their bravery and dedication to their patients  
21          through World War II, which saved lives and made  
22          significant contributions to the defeat of the Axis  
23          powers.

1 **SEC. 3. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

2 (a) PRESENTATION AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of  
3 the House of Representatives and the President pro tem-  
4 pore of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements  
5 for the presentation, on behalf of Congress, of a gold  
6 medal of appropriate design in honor of World War II  
7 Army and Navy Nurse Corps members, in recognition of  
8 the critical military service and devotion to duty of those  
9 nurses.

10 (b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For purposes of the  
11 presentation described in subsection (a), the Secretary of  
12 the Treasury (referred to in this Act as the “Secretary”)  
13 shall strike a gold medal with suitable emblems, devices,  
14 and inscriptions to be determined by the Secretary.

15 (c) SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.—

16 (1) IN GENERAL.—Following the award of the  
17 gold medal under subsection (a), the gold medal  
18 shall be given to the Smithsonian Institution, where  
19 it shall be available for display as appropriate and  
20 available for research.

21 (2) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of  
22 Congress that the Smithsonian Institution should  
23 make the gold medal received under paragraph (1)  
24 available for display elsewhere, particularly at—



(A) appropriate locations associated with the Army and Navy Nurse Corps of World War II, including—

(i) the U.S. Army Medical Center of Excellence;

(ii) the Women in Military Service for America Memorial;

(iii) the U.S. Army Women’s Museum;

(iv) the National Naval Medical Centers; and

(v) the National World War II Museum; and

(B) any other location determined appropriate by the Smithsonian Institution.

#### **SEC. 4. DUPLICATE MEDALS.**

The Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in bronze of the gold medal struck under section 3, at a price sufficient to cover the costs of the medals, including labor, materials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses.

#### **SEC. 5. STATUS OF MEDALS.**

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

1 (b) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of section  
2 5134 of title 31, United States Code, all medals struck  
3 under this Act shall be considered to be numismatic items.

4 **SEC. 6. AUTHORITY TO USE FUND AMOUNTS; PROCEEDS OF**  
5 **SALE.**

6 (a) AUTHORITY TO USE FUND AMOUNTS.—There is  
7 authorized to be charged against the United States Mint  
8 Public Enterprise Fund such amounts as may be nec-  
9 essary to pay for the costs of the medals struck under  
10 this Act.

11 (b) PROCEEDS OF SALE.—Amounts received from the  
12 sale of duplicate bronze medals authorized under section  
13 4 shall be deposited into the United States Mint Public  
14 Enterprise Fund.

