
SENATE COMMITTEE ON MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

Senator Bob Archuleta, Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No: SJR 14 **Hearing Date:** 6/8/26
Author: Cabaldon
Version: 4/22/26
Urgency: **Fiscal:** No
Consultant: Diego Nelson

Subject: World War II Nurses Congressional Gold Medal Act

DESCRIPTION

Summary:

This resolution urges California's Congressional delegation to support federal legislation awarding the Congressional Gold Medal to the members of the United States Army Nurse Corps and Navy Nurse Corps who served during World War II.

Existing law:

1. Authorizes Congress to award the Congressional Gold Medal to individuals or groups whose achievements or service have had a significant impact on the history and culture of the United States.
2. Recognizes the Congressional Gold Medal as one of the highest civilian honors awarded by the United States Congress.

This bill:

1. Urges California's Congressional delegation to cosponsor and support Senate Bill 2195 and House Resolution 4901, federal legislation that would award the Congressional Gold Medal to the World War II members of the United States Army Nurse Corps and Navy Nurse Corps.
2. Recognizes the service and sacrifices of military nurses who served during World War II in combat zones, aboard hospital ships, evacuation aircraft, military hospitals, and prisoner-of-war camps.

BACKGROUND

During World War II, more than 73,000 women served in the United States Army Nurse Corps and Navy Nurse Corps. These nurses provided critical medical care to wounded service members in combat theaters throughout Europe, the Pacific, and other operational areas around the world.

Army and Navy nurses served as military personnel and commissioned officers within the Armed Forces. Although they were noncombat personnel, many served in frontline conditions and were exposed to bombings, sniper attacks, disease outbreaks, and prisoner-of-war captivity while continuing to care for injured troops.

Military nurses played a significant role in improving battlefield survival rates and maintaining military medical operations during the war. Their service also extended beyond active combat operations into postwar humanitarian and recovery efforts, including care for victims of the atomic bombings in Hiroshima and medical support in refugee camps throughout Europe.

At the time, opportunities for women in military service were limited. Nursing represented one of the few military career fields in which women could serve close to combat operations as commissioned officers. Despite their wartime service, many women who served in military nursing roles did not initially receive equal status, compensation, or veterans benefits comparable to those received by male service members.

The Congressional Gold Medal represents one of Congress's most significant forms of national recognition. The honor dates back to the American Revolution, when Congress first used the medal to recognize extraordinary service to the nation. Unlike military decorations awarded through the Department of Defense, the Congressional Gold Medal is authorized through an act of Congress and signed into law by the President. Each medal is individually designed by the United States Mint to commemorate the specific achievements, service, or contributions of the recipient.

COMMENT

According to the author: "The act of honoring those who served is not merely ceremonial; it is an affirmation of the values a society holds dear. More than 73,000 women answered their country's call during World War II, serving as Army and Navy nurses in combat zones, aboard hospital ships, and in prisoner-of-war camps, often without full military status, equal pay, or the veteran benefits their service had plainly earned. Their sacrifice is California's story too, and SJR 14 urges California's Congressional delegation to cosponsor and advance federal legislation awarding these women the Congressional Gold Medal."

The Congressional Gold Medal is one of the highest civilian honors awarded by Congress and is used to recognize individuals or groups whose contributions have had a lasting impact on American history or society. In recent decades, Congress has used the medal to recognize World War II service groups whose contributions were historically overlooked or insufficiently recognized, including the Tuskegee Airmen, Navajo Code Talkers, Women Airforce Service Pilots, and the "Six Triple Eight" Central Postal Directory Battalion.

SJR 14 seeks to recognize the extraordinary contributions of the women who served in the Army Nurse Corps and Navy Nurse Corps during World War II and to urge Congress to formally honor their service with the Congressional Gold Medal. During the war, more than 59,000 women served in the Army Nurse Corps, while more than 11,000 served in the Navy Nurse Corps, reflecting the rapid expansion of military nursing after the United States entered the war. These nurses provided lifesaving care to American service members under dangerous and demanding wartime conditions, including in field and evacuation hospitals, aboard hospital ships, on medical evacuation aircraft, on hospital trains, and in prisoner-of-war camps. Army and Navy nurses served closer to combat than in prior conflicts and became an essential part of the military medical evacuation system that moved wounded troops from the battlefield to higher levels of care. Their work helped reduce wartime mortality among wounded service members and contributed to major advances in military medicine, evacuation care, and trauma treatment.

Today, only a handful of the women who served in the World War II Nurse Corps are believed to still be living. According to the advocacy coalition supporting the related congressional effort, only five living World War II military nurses have been identified, underscoring the urgency of providing national recognition while surviving members of this population may still receive it. Despite serving under military authority and, by 1944, being recognized as commissioned officers, their contributions have received comparatively limited national recognition. SJR 14 argues that their service, sacrifice, and role in saving the lives of American troops warrant formal recognition by Congress.

POSITIONS

Sponsor: Author.

Support: None

Oppose: None

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