

Date of Hearing: June 30, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS
Pilar Schiavo, Chair
SJR 14 (Cabaldon) – As Introduced April 22, 2026

SENATE VOTE: 37-0

SUBJECT: World War II Nurses Congressional Gold Medal Act.

SUMMARY: Urges California’s Congressional delegation to support federal legislation awarding the Congressional Gold Medal to the members of the United States (U.S.) Army Nurse Corps (ANC) and Navy Nurse Corps (NNC) who served during World War II. Specifically, **this resolution:**

- 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 ANC and NNC.
- 2) Recognizes the service and sacrifices of military nurses:
 - a) During World War II, over 59,000 U.S. Army nurses and 14,000 U.S. Navy nurses volunteered to provide essential medical care in combat zones and aboard hospital ships, often under challenging and dangerous conditions.
 - b) These nurses faced bombings, sniper fire, and imprisonment yet continued to deliver compassionate care, contributing to a notably low mortality rate among U.S. soldiers.
 - c) Their service extended into postwar humanitarian efforts, including caring for victims of the atomic bombings in Hiroshima and preventing disease outbreaks in European refugee camps.
 - d) The group of nurses represented diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, including African American, Chinese American, and Japanese American, as well as nurses from U.S. territories, who faced and overcame discrimination to serve honorably.
- 3) Resolves that despite their remarkable service, many nurses lacked full military status, equal pay, and veteran benefits, and their contributions remain significantly underrecognized.

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.
- 3) Authorizes the Congressional Gold Medal is authorized on an ad hoc basis. Requires every individual or group medal to be created through specific, stand-alone legislation passed by Congress and signed into law by the President

FISCAL EFFECT: None.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **PURPOSE OF THIS RESOLUTION.** 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.”
- 2) **BACKGROUND.**
 - a) **Nurse Corps.** The ANC and NNC are vital, commissioned medical branches that provide essential healthcare to service members and their families. Both boast historic legacies spanning over a century, evolving from wartime volunteers to modern, highly trained clinical specialists and healthcare executives.
 - b) **ANC.** The ANC was established on February 2, 1901, making it the oldest military nursing service in our nation. The ANC was organized in response to the challenges posed by the Spanish-American War, with a mission to combat the tropical disease epidemics that threatened our brave soldiers and citizens alike. In a testament to their dedicated service, nurses were granted “relative rank” in 1920, and by 1947, the Army-Navy Nurses Act elevated them to permanent commissioned officer status, securing their rightful place in the ranks of our Armed Forces. Today, the Army Nurse Corps stands strong, comprised entirely of registered nurses and advanced practice nurses dedicated to managing medical-surgical care, excelling in flight nursing, and providing critical support in field hospitals around the globe.
 - c) **NNC.** Founded on May 13, 1908, the original group of 20 women known as the "Sacred Twenty" paved the way for an extraordinary legacy. Initially an all-female unit, the NNC broke barriers by commissioning its first male officers in 1965. In a significant move in 1947, the Army-Navy Nurses Act granted Navy nurses enduring commissioned ranks, paralleling their Army counterparts. Today, Navy nurses are an integral part of military operations, serving at over 250 naval facilities worldwide, including aboard the renowned hospital ships, the USNS Comfort and USNS Mercy. Their commitment continues to impact lives across the globe.
 - d) **Congressional Gold Medal.** Congress has honored distinguished individuals through gold medals for over 200 years, starting with military leaders in 1776 and later including figures like Sir Winston Churchill and Mother Teresa. The process for awarding these medals involves a specified format that includes design, minting, and presentation, with consultations from the Citizens Coinage Advisory Committee and the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts. After the design is finalized by the Secretary of the Treasury, a ceremony is held for the recipient. Interest has grown in reviewing the authorization and award process, with options for Congress to adjust specific honorees, design elements, and rules governing the issuance of gold medals.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file.

Opposition

None on file.

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