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(Original Signature of Member)

119TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

**H. R.** \_\_\_\_\_

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

Ms. STEFANIK introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**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”.

6       **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7       The Congress finds the following:

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

9           (2) The Act of June 4, 1920 (41 Stat. 759;  
10      chapter 227), granted women in the Nurse Corps  
11      “relative rank”. This gave them the right to wear  
12      the military insignia, but did not confer military sta-  
13      tus or privileges. This arrangement meant women  
14      serving throughout World War II received 50 per-  
15      cent of the pay as compared to their male counter-  
16      parts, and none of the veteran benefits. Because  
17      they did not receive military status, they received no  
18      orientation or training before being deployed to hos-  
19      pitals near the front lines.

20          (3) Nurses served under fire in field hospitals  
21      and evacuation hospitals across 6 continents, on hos-  
22      pital trains and ships, and as flight nurses on med-  
23      ical transport planes. Several nurses were killed in  
24      action when their ships were torpedoed or field hos-  
25      pitals were bombed. Some even entered into combat

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

4 (4) General Douglas MacArthur ordered Amer-  
5 ican and Filipino Army Corps nurses and other med-  
6 ical personnel to the Bataan Peninsula to prepare 2  
7 emergency hospitals for United States and Filipino  
8 forces. General Hospital #1 received casualties di-  
9 rectly from the front lines and occupied an old Army  
10 barracks in Limay, Bataan prior to implementation  
11 of War Plan Orange 3 on December 24, 1941. The  
12 hospital received more than 1,200 battle casualties  
13 requiring major surgery within a month. General  
14 Hospital #2, a makeshift open ward hospital, was  
15 set up in Cabcaben, Bataan to receive discharged  
16 patients from Hospital #1. Hospital #2 accepted  
17 patients strong enough for evacuation, as it was out  
18 in the open, with no tents or buildings, and only tree  
19 canopy to conceal them from Japanese aircraft. Due  
20 to constant bombing, Hospital #1 was transferred  
21 to Little Baguio in Mariveles, Bataan on January  
22 25, 1942. Hospital #1 was bombed on March 29,  
23 1942, and again on April 7, killing or wounding  
24 more than 100 patients, but the nurses carried on  
25 with their duties as well as they were able. Fifty-

1 three American and 31 Filipina nurses were ordered  
2 to move from Bataan to Corregidor Island on April  
3 8. Ten of the American nurses were transferred suc-  
4 cessfully to Australia prior to the fall of Corregidor  
5 on May 6, 1942. Sixty-seven American nurses were  
6 eventually moved to Santo Tomas University Intern-  
7 ment Camp where they were liberated in February  
8 1945 while 31 Filipina nurses were moved to Bilibid  
9 Prison where they were conditionally released in  
10 July 1942.

11 (5) On December 10, 1941, Sangley Point  
12 Navy Yard was bombed by Japanese planes. Amer-  
13 ican and Filipino Navy Corps nurses, medical per-  
14 sonnel and patients of Cañacao Naval Hospital were  
15 transferred to the Army Sternberg Hospital in Ma-  
16 nila. During the first week of January 1942, the  
17 Japanese Army occupied Manila and the Navy  
18 nurses were transferred to St. Scholastica's College  
19 with their patients and eventually to Santo Tomas  
20 University Internment Camp on March 12, 1942.  
21 Eleven American and Filipino Navy Corps nurses  
22 were transferred to Los Baños Prison Camp on May  
23 14, 1943, where they stayed until their liberation in  
24 February 1945. Following the United States Army  
25 surrender of the Philippines to the Japanese on May

1       6, 1942, 67 Army nurses were taken to Santo  
2       Tomas Internment Camp in Manila, where they re-  
3       mained until February 1945. During the 37 months  
4       in captivity, these women endured primitive condi-  
5       tions and starvation rations, but continued to care  
6       for the ill and injured in the internment camp hos-  
7       pital.

8           (6) Chinese, Chinese-American, and Japanese-  
9       American nurses served in Army Hospitals in China,  
10      Hawaii, and in the mainland United States under  
11      the Army and Navy Corps. Despite the internment  
12      of many Japanese-American families during World  
13      War II, Japanese-American women joined the Nurse  
14      Cadet Corps to serve the United States. Chinese and  
15      Chinese-American nurses were recruited by the Fly-  
16      ing Tigers, serving both in dangerous missions over  
17      the Himalayas as well as in U.S. Army hospitals.

18           (7) Early in the morning of November 8, 1942,  
19      60 nurses attached to the 48th Surgical Hospital  
20      landed off the coast of North Africa. The nurses  
21      wore helmets and carried full packs containing med-  
22      ical equipment. Without weapons, they waded ashore  
23      amid enemy sniper fire and ultimately took shelter  
24      in an abandoned civilian hospital, where they began  
25      caring for invasion casualties. There was no elec-

1        tricity or running water, and the only medical sup-  
2        plies available were those the nurses had brought  
3        themselves.

4            (8) In Anzio, Italy, nurses dug foxholes outside  
5        their tents or under their cots and cared for patients  
6        under German shellfire. The field hospital tents were  
7        marked by large red crosses and were sometimes de-  
8        liberately hit with artillery shells and bombs. On  
9        February 7, 1944, a German pilot being pursued by  
10       British fighter planes dropped 5 antipersonnel  
11       bombs on the hospital, destroying 29 ward tents,  
12       killing 26 and wounding 64. The dead included 3  
13       nurses, 2 medical officers, a Red Cross worker, 14  
14       enlisted men and 6 patients. Troops came to refer  
15       to the hospital area as “Hell’s Half-Acre” because it  
16       was hit so frequently by enemy fire. At least 200  
17       nurses took part in the Anzio campaign, caring for  
18       more than 33,000 patients behind enemy lines.

19            (9) Army and Navy nurses acclimated quickly  
20        to difficult and dangerous conditions with a min-  
21        imum of complaints, and were essential members of  
22        the field armies.

23            (10) The presence of nurses at the front im-  
24        proved morale because soldiers realized that they

1 would receive skilled care in the event they were  
2 wounded.

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

7 (12) After the war, broad public health mis-  
8 sions required that Army and Navy nurses supervise  
9 communicable disease measures as former enemy  
10 countries were reorganized. In Hiroshima, these offi-  
11 cers cared for victims of the atomic bombs. In Mu-  
12 nich, they prevented mass epidemic in refugee  
13 camps. Army and Navy nurses even provided pre-  
14 natal, infant, and mental health care in other  
15 former-enemy territories.

16 (13) Nurses received 1,619 medals, citations,  
17 and commendations during the war, reflecting the  
18 courage and dedication of all who served. Sixteen  
19 medals were awarded posthumously to nurses who  
20 died as a result of enemy fire, including 6 nurses  
21 who died at Anzio, 6 who died when the hospital  
22 ship Comfort was attacked by a Japanese suicide  
23 plane, and 4 flight nurses. Thirteen other flight  
24 nurses died in weather-related crashes while on duty.

1           (14) In 1944, Congress passed a bill that  
2           granted Army and Navy Nurses actual military rank  
3           and benefits, approved for the duration of the war  
4           plus 6 months.

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

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

13          (17) Although African-American nurses were  
14          fully qualified and prepared to serve as nurses at the  
15          onset of World War II, racial segregation and dis-  
16          crimination made it difficult for Black women to join  
17          the ranks of the Army Nurse Corps.

18          (18) As the Army Nurse Corps began expand-  
19          ing its recruiting process, thousands of Black nurses  
20          who wanted to serve their country filled out applica-  
21          tions.

22          (19) While the Army did eventually integrate  
23          African-American nurses in 1941, it did so  
24          unwillingly and placed a quota on the number of Af-

1        rican-American nurses that they would accept, cap-  
2        ping the number allowed to join at 56.

3            (20) Many of them had hardship tours and  
4        were sent to segregated camps to take care of Afri-  
5        can-American soldiers and would rotate and allow  
6        White nurses reprieve in taking care of German pris-  
7        oners of war. As the war progressed, the number of  
8        Black nurses allowed to enlist remained low, al-  
9        though the quota was officially lifted in July 1944.

10           (21) The extraordinary efforts of these women  
11        are deserving of belated official recognition.

12           (22) The United States is eternally grateful to  
13        the nurses of the Army and Navy Nurse Corps for  
14        their bravery and dedication to their patients  
15        through World War II, which saved lives and made  
16        significant contributions to the defeat of the Axis  
17        powers.

18   **SEC. 3. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

19        (a) AWARD AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of the  
20        House of Representatives and the President pro tempore  
21        of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements for the  
22        award, on behalf of Congress, of a gold medal of appro-  
23        priate design in honor of World War II Army and Navy  
24        Nurse Corps members, in recognition of the critical mili-  
25        tary service and devotion to duty of those nurses.

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

6 (c) SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.—

7 (1) IN GENERAL.—Following the award of the  
8 gold medal under subsection (a), the gold medal  
9 shall be given to the Smithsonian Institution, where  
10 it shall be available for display as appropriate and  
11 made available for research.

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

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

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

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

23 (iii) the U.S. Army Women’s Museum;

24 (iv) the National Naval Medical Cen-  
25 ters; and

1 (v) the National World War II Mu-  
2 seum; and

3 (B) any other location determined appro-  
4 priate by the Smithsonian Institution.

5 **SEC. 4. DUPLICATE MEDALS.**

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

10 **SEC. 5. STATUS OF MEDALS.**

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

14 (b) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of sections  
15 5134 and 5136 of title 31, United States Code, all medals  
16 struck under this Act shall be considered to be numismatic  
17 items.

18 **SEC. 6. AUTHORITY TO USE FUND AMOUNTS; PROCEEDS OF**  
19 **SALE.**

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

1           (b) PROCEEDS OF SALE.—Amounts received from the  
2 sale of duplicate bronze medals authorized under section  
3 4 shall be deposited into the United States Mint Public  
4 Enterprise Fund.