

# WWII Nurses Congressional Medal Act

**The objective of the WWII Nurses Congressional Medal Act is to honor the brave women who served in World War II as members of the U.S. Army Nurse Corps and U.S. Navy Nurse Corps.**

## **Background:**

By the time World War II ended, more than 59,000 Army Nurses and 14,000 Navy Nurses had volunteered to serve. Nurses received 1,619 medals, citations, and commendations during the war, reflecting the courage and dedication of all who served. Sixteen medals were awarded posthumously to nurses who died as a result of enemy fire, including six nurses who died at Anzio, six of who died when the Hospital Ship Comfort was attacked by a Japanese suicide plane, and four flight nurses. Thirteen other flight nurses died in weather-related crashes while on duty.

Although African American nurses were fully qualified and prepared to serve as nurses at the onset of World War II, racial segregation and discrimination made it difficult for black women to join the ranks of the Army Nurse Corps (referred to in this Act as the “ANC”). While the Army did eventually integrate African American Nurses in 1941, it did so unwillingly and placed a quota on the number of African American nurses that they would accept, capping the number allowed to join at 56.

Wartime experience brought innovations that revolutionized medical services with a greater understanding of shock, blood replacement, and resuscitation. Flight nurses helped to establish an incredible low record of deaths in flight, which was only five per 100,000 patients. It is a tribute to the 500 nurses who served as members of 31 medical air evacuation transport squadrons operating worldwide that only 46 of the 1,176,048 patients air evacuated throughout the war died on route.

This year marks the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the passage of the Women’s Armed Services Integration Act (1948), which enabled women to serve as permanent, regular members of the armed forces. Though this came after the war, it highlighted the expanded contributions of women during WWII.

**Colead:** Senator Daines

**Cosponsors:** Warren, Shaheen, Blackburn, Braun

**House Companion Bill:** Representative Stefanik and Representative Houlihan

## **Supporting Organizations:**

American Red Cross, Friends of the National World War II Memorial (Washington, D.C.), National Military Women’s War Memorial (Washington, D.C.), Wisconsin Veterans Museum, Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs, Wisconsin VFW and Naples-Monte Cassino VFW (Italy).