

S.L.C.  
*Jerry Beldi*

117TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

**S.** \_\_\_\_\_

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.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

\_\_\_\_\_ (legislative day, \_\_\_\_\_), \_\_\_\_\_  
Ms. BALDWIN introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on \_\_\_\_\_

*for herself and  
Senators Daines,  
Gillibrand, King,  
Warren, Blumenthal,  
Braun, and Blackburn*

**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 U.S. Army Nurses and 1,700 U.S. Navy Nurses  
6           on active duty. By the time World War II ended,  
7           more than 59,000 Army Nurses and 14,000 Navy  
8           Nurses had volunteered to serve.

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

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

1       and 2 groups were captured as prisoners of war by  
2       the Japanese.

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

24           (5) Early in the morning of November 8, 1942,  
25      60 nurses attached to the 48th Surgical Hospital

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

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

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

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

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

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

21          (11) Nurses received 1,619 medals, citations,  
22          and commendations during the war, reflecting the  
23          courage and dedication of all who served. Sixteen  
24          medals were awarded posthumously to nurses who  
25          died as a result of enemy fire, including 6 nurses

1       who died at Anzio, 6 who died when the Hospital  
2       Ship Comfort was attacked by a Japanese suicide  
3       plane, and 4 flight nurses. Thirteen other flight  
4       nurses died in weather-related crashes while on duty.

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

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

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

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

23              (16) As the ANC began expanding its recruit-  
24      ing process, thousands of black nurses who wanted  
25      to serve their country filled out applications.

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

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

13           (19) The extraordinary efforts of these women  
14 are deserving of belated official recognition.

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

21 **SEC. 3. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

22           (a) PRESENTATION AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of  
23 the House of Representatives and the President pro tem-  
24 pore of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements  
25 for the presentation, on behalf of Congress, of a gold

1 medal of appropriate design in honor of World War II  
2 Army and Navy Nurse Corps members, in recognition of  
3 the critical military service and devotion to duty of those  
4 nurses.

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

10 (c) SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.—

11 (1) IN GENERAL.—Following the award of the  
12 gold medal under subsection (a), the gold medal  
13 shall be given to the Smithsonian Institution, where  
14 it shall be available for display as appropriate and  
15 available for research.

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

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

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

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

3 (iii) the U.S. Army Women's Museum;

4 (iv) the National Naval Medical Cen-  
5 ters; and

6 (v) the National World War II Mu-  
7 seum; and

8 (B) any other location determined appro-  
9 priate by the Smithsonian Institution.

10 **SEC. 4. DUPLICATE MEDALS.**

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

15 **SEC. 5. STATUS OF MEDALS.**

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

19 (b) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of section  
20 5134 of title 31, United States Code, all medals struck  
21 under this Act shall be considered to be numismatic items.

22 **SEC. 6. AUTHORITY TO USE FUND AMOUNTS; PROCEEDS OF**  
23 **SALE.**

24 (a) AUTHORITY TO USE FUND AMOUNTS.—There is  
25 authorized to be charged against the United States Mint

1 Public Enterprise Fund such amounts as may be nec-  
2 essary to pay for the costs of the medals struck under  
3 this Act.

4 (b) PROCEEDS OF SALE.—Amounts received from the  
5 sale of duplicate bronze medals authorized under section  
6 4 shall be deposited into the United States Mint Public  
7 Enterprise Fund.