

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3138

To award a Congressional Gold Medal to the members of the Women's Army Corps who were assigned to the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion, known as the "Six Triple Eight".

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 5, 2019

Ms. MOORE (for herself, Mr. WATKINS, Ms. JACKSON LEE, Mrs. BEATTY, Mr. GRIJALVA, Ms. WILD, Mr. KHANNA, Mr. HIGGINS of New York, Mr. RUPPERSBERGER, Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi, Mr. RICHMOND, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Ms. KELLY of Illinois, Mr. COX of California, Mr. COHEN, Mr. MCGOVERN, Mr. RASKIN, Ms. NORTON, Ms. PLASKETT, Ms. CLARKE of New York, Mr. COLE, Mr. PRICE of North Carolina, Mr. LYNCH, Mr. BROWN of Maryland, Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois, Mr. BISHOP of Georgia, Ms. KAPTUR, Mr. CUMMINGS, Mr. MEEKS, Mr. EVANS, Ms. LEE of California, Ms. WILSON of Florida, Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN, Mr. RUSH, Ms. TITUS, Ms. BLUNT ROCHESTER, Mrs. LURIA, Mr. ENGEL, Ms. HAALAND, and Ms. SCHAKOWSKY) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Financial Services, and in addition to the Committee on House Administration, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To award a Congressional Gold Medal to the members of the Women's Army Corps who were assigned to the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion, known as the "Six Triple Eight".

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 “‘Six Triple Eight’ Con-
5 gressional Gold Medal Act of 2019”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

8 (1) On July 1, 1943, President Franklin D.
9 Roosevelt signed into law legislation that established
10 the Women’s Army Corps (referred to in this section
11 as the “WAC”) as a component in the Army. The
12 WAC was converted from the Women’s Army Auxil-
13 iary Corps (referred to in this section as the
14 “WAAC”), which had been created in 1942 without
15 official military status. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt
16 and Mary McLeod Bethune, the founder of the Na-
17 tional Council of Negro Women, advocated for the
18 admittance of African-American women into the
19 newly formed WAC to serve as officers and enlisted
20 personnel.

21 (2) Dubbed “10 percenters”, the recruitment of
22 African-American women to the WAAC was limited
23 to 10 percent of the population of the WAAC to
24 match the proportion of African Americans in the
25 national population. Despite an Executive order

1 issued by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1941
2 banning racial discrimination in civilian defense in-
3 dustries, the Armed Forces remained segregated.
4 Enlisted women served in segregated units, partici-
5 pated in segregated training, lived in separate quar-
6 ters, ate at separate tables in mess halls, and used
7 segregated recreational facilities. Officers received
8 their officer candidate training in integrated units
9 but lived under segregated conditions. Specialist and
10 technical training schools were integrated in 1943.
11 During World War II, a total of 6,520 African-
12 American women served in the WAAC and the
13 WAC.

14 (3) After several units of White women were
15 sent to serve in the European theater of operations
16 (referred to in this section as the “ETO”) during
17 World War II, African-American organizations advo-
18 cated for the War Department to extend the oppor-
19 tunity to serve overseas to African-American WAC
20 units.

21 (4) In November 1944, the War Department
22 approved sending African-American women to serve
23 in Europe. A battalion of all African-American
24 women drawn from the WAC, the Army Service
25 Forces, and the Army Air Forces was created and

1 designated as the 6888th Central Postal Directory
2 Battalion (referred to in this section as the
3 “6888th”), which was nicknamed the “Six Triple
4 Eight”.

5 (5) With the exception of smaller units of Afri-
6 can-American nurses who served in Africa, Aus-
7 tralia, and England, the 6888th was the only Afri-
8 can-American women’s unit to serve overseas during
9 World War II.

10 (6) Army officials reported a shortage of quali-
11 fied postal officers within the ETO, which resulted
12 in a backlog of undelivered mail. As Allied forces
13 drove across Europe, the ever-changing locations of
14 servicemembers hampered the delivery of mail to
15 those servicemembers. One general predicted that
16 the backlog in Birmingham, England, would take 6
17 months to process and the lack of reliable mail serv-
18 ice was hurting morale.

19 (7) In May 1945, the 6888th arrived in Bir-
20 mingham. Upon their arrival, the 6888th found
21 warehouses filled with millions of pieces of mail in-
22 tended for members of the Armed Forces, United
23 States Government personnel, and Red Cross work-
24 ers serving in the ETO.

1 (8) The 6888th created effective processes and
2 filing systems to track individual servicemembers,
3 organize “undeliverable” mail, determine the in-
4 tended recipient for insufficiently addressed mail,
5 and handle mail addressed to servicemembers who
6 had died. Adhering to their motto of “No mail, low
7 morale”, the women processed an average of 65,000
8 pieces of mail per shift and cleared the 6-month
9 backlog of mail within 3 months.

10 (9) The 6888th traveled to Rouen, France,
11 later in May 1945 and worked through a separate
12 backlog of undelivered mail dating back as far as 3
13 years.

14 (10) At the completion of their mission, the en-
15 tire unit returned to the United States. The 6888th
16 was discontinued on March 9, 1946, at Fort Dix,
17 New Jersey.

18 (11) These women faced racism and sexism,
19 and worked in austere conditions, but were able to
20 clear more than 18,000,000 pieces of backlog mail
21 for Americans in the ETO. Three died in France
22 and are buried in Normandy, France, while three
23 others were beaten in a bus station in Kentucky.

24 (12) According to the Department of Defense,
25 during the period between February 1945 and Feb-

1 ruary 1946, the members of the “Six Triple Eight”
2 “displayed meritorious service while deployed to
3 England and France” and “conducted combat sup-
4 port operation which impacted the morale and wel-
5 fare of U.S. servicemembers fighting across the Eu-
6 ropean continent”.

7 (13) The Department of the Army awarded its
8 Meritorious Unit Commendation award to the mem-
9 bers of the “Six Triple Eight” noting that their
10 “professionalism and dedication are in keeping with
11 the finest tradition of military service and reflect
12 great credit upon themselves, the Women’s Army
13 Corps, and the U.S. Army”.

14 (14) The accomplishments of the 6888th in Eu-
15 rope encouraged the General Board, United States
16 Forces, European Theater of Operations to adopt
17 the following premise in their study of the WAC
18 issued in December 1945: “[T]he national security
19 program is the joint responsibility of all Americans
20 irrespective of color or sex” and “the continued use
21 of colored, along with white, female military per-
22 sonnel is required in such strength as is proportion-
23 ately appropriate to the relative population distribu-
24 tion between colored and white races”.

1 (15) The members of the “Six Triple Eight” re-
2 ceived the European African Middle Eastern Cam-
3 paign Medal, the Women’s Army Corps Service
4 Medal, and the World War II Victory Medal for
5 their service.

6 (16) While over 850 African-American women
7 from across the United States have been docu-
8 mented to serve overseas with the “Six Triple
9 Eight”, only a few are still alive including Anna Mae
10 Wilson Robertson of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Delores
11 L. Ruddock of Mt. Rainer, Maryland, Lena
12 Derrieott Bell King of Las Vegas, Nevada, Elizabeth
13 Bernice Barker Johnson of Hickory, North Carolina,
14 Maybelle Rutland Tanner Campbell of Alexandria,
15 Virginia, Fannie Mae McClendon of Arizona, and
16 Indiana Hunt Martin of Maryland.

17 **SEC. 3. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

18 (a) AWARD AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of the
19 House of Representatives and the President pro tempore
20 of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements for the
21 award, on behalf of Congress, of a single gold medal of
22 appropriate design in honor of the women of the 6888th
23 Central Postal Directory Battalion (commonly known as
24 the “Six Triple Eight”) in recognition of—

1 (1) the pioneering military service of those
2 women;

3 (2) the devotion to duty of those women; and

4 (3) the contributions made by those women to
5 increase the morale of all United States personnel
6 stationed in the European theater of operations dur-
7 ing World War II.

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

13 (c) SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.—

14 (1) IN GENERAL.—After the award of the gold
15 medal under subsection (a), the medal shall be given
16 to the Smithsonian Institution, where the medal
17 shall be available for display, as appropriate, and
18 made available for research.

19 (2) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of
20 Congress that the Smithsonian Institution should
21 make the gold medal received under paragraph (1)
22 available elsewhere, particularly at—

23 (A) appropriate locations associated with
24 the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion;

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

3 (C) the United States Army Women's Mu-
4 seum;

5 (D) the National World War II Museum
6 and Memorial; and

7 (E) any other location determined appro-
8 priate by the Smithsonian Institution.

9 **SEC. 4. DUPLICATE MEDALS.**

10 Under such regulations as the Secretary may pre-
11 scribe, 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. NATIONAL MEDALS.**

16 (a) NATIONAL MEDALS.—Medals struck under this
17 Act are national medals for purposes of chapter 51 of title
18 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.

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