

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Joins Sen. Daines to introduce WWII Nurses Congressional Gold Medal Act

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Bipartisan Legislation Honors the Brave Women who Served in World War II as Members of the U.S. Army Nurse Corps and U.S. Navy Nurse Corps

WASHINGTON, D.C. – As America celebrates National Nurses Week, U.S. Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Steve Daines (R-MT) led the Senate introduction of the *WWII Nurses Congressional Gold Medal Act*.

In 1935, prior to the start of World War II in December 1941, there were fewer than 600 U.S. Army Nurses and 1,700 U.S. Navy Nurses on active duty. By the time the war ended, more than 59,000 Army Nurses and 14,000 Navy Nurses had volunteered to serve. The bipartisan legislation, which is being introduced in the Senate and House, will 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. One such instance of bravery is highlighted by the story of Lt. Ellen Ainsworth of Glenwood City, WI. Despite being struck in the chest by shrapnel while her hospital was attacked in Anzio, Italy, she and three other nurses evacuated forty-two patients to safety. Lt. Ainsworth eventually succumbed to her injuries. She and the other nurses involved in the attack were awarded the Silver Star for bravery – the first women to receive this commendation from the Army.

“I am so honored to have an opportunity to work with Wisconsinites on behalf of patriotic women who served and sacrificed for our country in such a heroic way during World War II,” **said Senator Baldwin.** “I want to thank my Senate colleagues for working with me across party lines to support this bipartisan

legislation which finally recognizes, respects, and rewards the brave service of so many members of the U.S. Army Nurse Corps and U.S. Navy Nurse Corps.”

“America’s nurses who served our nation during World War II did so with honor and distinction,” **Senator Daines said.** “The compassion and care they gave undoubtedly contributed to America’s victory, and for that they have earned Congress’ highest honor—the Congressional Gold Medal.”

“These brave service women from the Greatest Generation are so deserving of this tribute and award. To a world torn apart by war, our WWII nurses exemplified the best in American values and helped win the war,” **said Sally Berkholder of New Richmond, Wisconsin, who advocated on behalf WWII nurses to introduce the legislation.**

“Let us all pause to remember and honor these women veterans who proudly put on the uniform to care for our sick and wounded service members on the front lines, those stationed on ships and bases, and especially for those nurses who never made it home. I am grateful for Senator Baldwin’s longstanding commitment to our veterans through this worthy recognition for the sacrifice and service of our nation’s women veteran nurses of WWII. I am so pleased to see their significant contributions finally recognized with the Congressional Gold Medal,” **said Secretary Mary Kolar, Director of Wisconsin Department of Veteran’s Affairs.**

“The American Red Cross applauds the WWII Nurses Congressional Gold Medal Act in honor of the brave women who served as members of the U.S. Army Nurse Corps and U.S. Navy Nurse Corps,” **said Linda MacIntyre, Chief Nurse, American Red Cross.** “Despite historical inequities based on gender and race, women shared their expertise as nurses and physicians to foster wellbeing and mitigate suffering and death. I am deeply grateful for the resilience, legacy and inspiration of these extraordinary nurses and their colleagues.”

“Combat nurses served during WWII all over the world, on land, sea, and air. Their service was often arduous, sometimes leading to wounds or death, while a few nurses endured years of captivity. Through all of it, these women again and again did their duty to the highest standards of professionalism and steadfastness. ‘I never saw a nurse afraid,’ recalled General Carlos Romulo, who spoke for many. There’s a reason that the term ‘angels’ was used multiple times to refer to combat nurses. The Wisconsin Veterans Museum is proud to preserve stories of Wisconsin-

connected combat nurses in our collections. A Congressional Gold Medal would be a singular honor and well-deserved recognition of what these women did for their country,” **said Christopher L. Kolakowski, Director, Wisconsin Veterans Museum.**

“This bill recognizes the heroic service provided by American combat nurses in WWII. My mother Avis Dagit Schorer, an Army nurse in the 56th Evacuation Hospital, moved with the front lines of American troops across North Africa and Italy. She was among the troops and medical staff trapped on the beach in Anzio, and my mother was attending to her nursing colleague and Wisconsin native Ellen Ainsworth when Ellen died on that beach as a result of German shelling. This bill is a fitting tribute to the gallantry and devotion to their country displayed by the American combat nurses in WWII. Please honor those nurses by passing this bill,” **said Joseph U. Schorer.**

In the Senate, the bipartisan legislation is cosponsored by Senators Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Angus King (I-ME), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Marsha Blackburn (R-TN), and Mike Braun (R-IN).

In the House, the *WWII Nurses Congressional Gold Medal Act* has been introduced by U.S. Representatives Anthony Brown (D-MD) and Elise Stefanik (R-NY).

“When we look back on the extraordinary efforts by ordinary Americans during World War II, nurses deserve our recognition, gratitude, and honor. These heroes were on the front lines of the war, serving under fire, to save the lives of fellow servicemembers and allies fighting for freedom,” **said Congressman Anthony G. Brown, a 30-year Army veteran.** “Their service to our nation saved lives and helped turn the tide of this great war. The example they set paved the way for the Army and Navy Nurse Corps members to follow. Their devotion, bravery, and patriotism have earned them Congress’ highest honor.”

“Nurses during World War II put their lives on the line for our nation and performed essential combat services to save others. Their significant contributions to the United States’ success in World War II deserves to be remembered. I am proud to introduce this bipartisan legislation to recognize the service and sacrifice of these brave nurses and ensure they are properly recognized for their service to our nation,” **said Congresswoman Stefanik.**

A copy of the *WWII Nurses Congressional Gold Medal Act* is available [here](#).