

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 321

AN ACT

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,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “ ‘Six Triple Eight’ Con-
3 gressional Gold Medal Act of 2021”.

4 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

5 Congress finds the following:

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

19 (2) Dubbed “10 percenters”, the recruitment of
20 African-American women to the WAAC was limited
21 to 10 percent of the population of the WAAC to
22 match the proportion of African-Americans in the
23 national population. Despite an Executive order
24 issued by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1941
25 banning racial discrimination in civilian defense in-
26 dustries, the Armed Forces remained segregated.

1 Enlisted women served in segregated units, partici-
2 pated in segregated training, lived in separate quar-
3 ters, ate at separate tables in mess halls, and used
4 segregated recreational facilities. Officers received
5 their officer candidate training in integrated units
6 but lived under segregated conditions. Specialist and
7 technical training schools were integrated in 1943.
8 During World War II, a total of 6,520 African-
9 American women served in the WAAC and the
10 WAC.

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

18 (4) In November 1944, the War Department
19 approved sending African-American women to serve
20 in Europe. A battalion of all African-American
21 women drawn from the WAC, the Army Service
22 Forces, and the Army Air Forces was created and
23 designated as the 6888th Central Postal Directory
24 Battalion (referred to in this section as the

1 “6888th”), which was nicknamed the “Six Triple
2 Eight”.

3 (5) Army officials reported a shortage of quali-
4 fied postal officers within the ETO, which resulted
5 in a backlog of undelivered mail. As Allied forces
6 drove across Europe, the ever-changing locations of
7 servicemembers hampered the delivery of mail to
8 those servicemembers. Because 7,000,000 civilians
9 and military personnel from the United States
10 served in the ETO, many of those individuals had
11 identical names. For example, 7,500 such individuals
12 were named Robert Smith. One general predicted
13 that the backlog in Birmingham, England, would
14 take 6 months to process and the lack of reliable
15 mail service was hurting morale.

16 (6) In February 1945, the 6888th arrived in
17 Birmingham. Upon their arrival, the 6888th found
18 warehouses filled with millions of pieces of mail in-
19 tended for members of the Armed Forces, United
20 States Government personnel, and Red Cross work-
21 ers serving in the ETO.

22 (7) The 6888th created effective processes and
23 filing systems to track individual servicemembers,
24 organize “undeliverable” mail, determine the in-
25 tended recipient for insufficiently addressed mail,

1 and handle mail addressed to servicemembers who
2 had died. Adhering to their motto of “No mail, low
3 morale”, the women processed an average of 65,000
4 pieces of mail per shift and cleared the 6-month
5 backlog of mail within 3 months.

6 (8) The 6888th traveled to Rouen, France, in
7 May 1945 and worked through a separate backlog of
8 undelivered mail dating back as far as 3 years.

9 (9) At the completion of their mission, the unit
10 returned to the United States. The 6888th was dis-
11 continued on March 9, 1946, at Camp Kilmer, New
12 Jersey.

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

24 (11) With the exception of smaller units of Af-
25 rican-American nurses who served in Africa, Aus-

1 tralia, and England, the 6888th was the only Afri-
 2 can-American Women’s Army Corps unit to serve
 3 overseas during World War II.

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

9 (13) In 2019, the Army awarded the 6888th
 10 the Meritorious Unit Commendation.

11 **SEC. 3. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

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

19 (1) the pioneering military service of those
 20 women;

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

22 (3) the contributions made by those women to
 23 increase the morale of all United States personnel
 24 stationed in the European Theater of Operations
 25 during World War II.

1 (b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For the 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.—After the award of the gold
 8 medal under subsection (a), the medal shall be given
 9 to the Smithsonian Institution, where the medal
 10 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 elsewhere, particularly at—

16 (A) appropriate locations associated with
 17 the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion;

18 (B) the Women in Military Service for
 19 America Memorial;

20 (C) the United States Army Women’s Mu-
 21 seum;

22 (D) the National World War II Museum
 23 and Memorial;

24 (E) the National Museum of the United
 25 States Army; and

1 (F) any other location determined appro-
 2 priate by the Smithsonian Institution.

3 **SEC. 4. DUPLICATE MEDALS.**

4 Under such regulations as the Secretary may pre-
 5 scribe, the Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in
 6 bronze of the gold medal struck under section 3 at a price
 7 sufficient to cover the costs of the medals, including labor,
 8 materials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses.

9 **SEC. 5. NATIONAL MEDALS.**

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

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

16 **SEC. 6. AUTHORITY TO USE FUND AMOUNTS; PROCEEDS OF**
 17 **SALE.**

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

23 (b) PROCEEDS OF SALE.—Amounts received from the
 24 sale of duplicate bronze medals authorized under section

- 1 4 shall be deposited into the United States Mint Public
- 2 Enterprise Fund.

Passed the Senate April 29, 2021.

Attest:

Secretary.

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