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ACR-108 Women's Military History Week. (2015-2016)

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Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 108

CHAPTER 14

Relative to Women's Military History Week.

[Filed with Secretary of State March 17, 2016.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 108, Mathis. Women's Military History Week.

This measure would recognize "Women Warriors" by proclaiming the week of March 14, 2016, to March 20, 2016, inclusive, as Women's Military History Week in California and would encourage Californians to recognize, among other things, the contributions of women to our military and our freedom and the historic lifting of the ban on women in combat on January 24, 2013.

Fiscal Committee: no

WHEREAS, January 24, 2016, marks the third anniversary of the lifting of the ban on women in combat; and

WHEREAS, This groundbreaking decision overturns a 1994 Pentagon rule that restricted women from artillery, armor, and infantry, among other combat roles, even though in reality women have frequently found themselves in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. According to the Pentagon, hundreds of thousands of women have been deployed in those conflicts; and

WHEREAS, Former United States Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta initiated the lifting of the ban on women in combat in 2013. On December 3, 2015, current United States Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter directed the full integration of women into all military branches; and

WHEREAS, Over the past two decades of conflict, women have served with valor in combat zones, often under fire, but had been prevented from officially holding combat positions under the 1994 Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule, which generally barred women from assignment to units below brigade level when the unit's primary mission was direct ground combat; and

WHEREAS, Approximately 300,000 women in uniform have served in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Female service members have earned more than 10,000 combat action badges and Bronze Stars, respectively, and at least 12 Bronze Stars with Valor. Women have served in intelligence gathering, as combat pilots, field artillery officers, chaplains, special operations civil affairs officers, and even members of the ultra-secretive Delta Force; and

WHEREAS, Women have served bravely in every major United States conflict since the American Revolutionary War. Our current servicewomen are able to serve due to the incredible work of women of past generations; and

WHEREAS, As stated by then-Secretary of Defense Panetta, "Women have shown great courage and sacrifice on and off the battlefield, contributed in unprecedented ways to the military's mission, and proven their ability to serve in an expanding number of roles." Panetta added, "[R]escinding the [1994 ban on women in combat] is to ensure that the mission is met with the best qualified and most capable people, regardless of gender"; and

WHEREAS, Since the lifting of the ban, three women have already made history by being the first to graduate from the United States Army Ranger School, the Army's premier combat leadership course, proving to themselves and to the world that women can meet men's standard for combat; and

WHEREAS, As a country based on freedom and opportunity, regardless of creed, race, gender, or sexual orientation, we must demonstrate the same opportunity in our armed forces, while maintaining the same standard of excellence our military has set; and

WHEREAS, Our military exists to fight our nation's wars and to defend our Constitution and our freedom. Opening up combat roles to women will add to military excellence, not subtract from it; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate thereof concurring, That the Legislature hereby recognizes "Women Warriors" by proclaiming the week of March 14, 2016, to March 20, 2016, inclusive, as Women's Military History Week in California; and be it further

Resolved, That the Legislature encourages Californians to recognize the contributions of women to our military and our freedom, the courageous sacrifices that women have made while serving our country with heroism, and the historic lifting of the ban on women in combat on January 24, 2013; and be it further

Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.