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ACR-48 Women Warriors. (2019-2020)

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Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 48

CHAPTER 44

Relative to Women's Military History Week.

[Filed with Secretary of State April 29, 2019.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 48, Reyes. Women Warriors.

This measure would recognize "Women Warriors" by proclaiming the week of March 18, 2019, to March 22, 2019, inclusive, as Women's Military History Week in California, and encourage Californians to recognize, among other things, the contributions of women and those who identify as 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, Women have served bravely in every major United States conflict since the American Revolutionary War, but their courage and service have gone unrecognized. Our current servicewomen would be unable to serve without the precedence, persistence, determination, and unyielding resilience of the incredible strides of women of previous generations; and

WHEREAS, Approximately 300,000 women in uniform have served in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and over 1.3 million women currently serve in the United States Military. Women have served in intelligence gathering and as combat pilots, field artillery officers, chaplains, special operations civil affairs officers, and even members of the ultra-secretive Delta Force; and

WHEREAS, Cathay Williams was the first and only documented African American woman to enlist in the United States Army as a Buffalo Soldier in 1866 and Carmen Contreras-Bozak was the first Latina to serve in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps in 1942; and

WHEREAS, Over 400 women have been killed in combat since World War I and over 90 women have been identified as prisoners of war since World War II; and

WHEREAS, January 24, 2019, marks the sixth anniversary of the lifting of the ban on women in combat; and

WHEREAS, This groundbreaking decision overturned a 1994 Pentagon rule that restricted women from all combat-related roles, including artillery, armor, and infantry; and

WHEREAS, Former United States Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter directed the full integration of women into all military branches in 2015; and

WHEREAS, The full integration of women into all military branches nevertheless continued to impede a woman's ability to serve in combat due to the "Leaders First" policy, which maintained that, in certain cases, enlisted women must wait to enter combat until two or more "women leaders" are assigned to those units; and

WHEREAS, As of February 2018, women comprised 16 percent of the total military force, but only 2 percent of total leadership positions; 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 barred women from assignment to units below brigade level if the unit's primary mission was direct ground combat; and

WHEREAS, As stated by then-Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, "[w]omen 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, It is recognized that women have always been capable of serving in combat and that it is policies like the 1994 ban on women in combat that have precluded women from serving; and

WHEREAS, Since the lifting of the ban, 12 women have made history by being the first graduates of the United States Army Ranger School, the Army's premier combat leadership course, and have proven to the world that a woman's ability to serve should never have been doubted and that women can unequivocally meet the standards set for men in combat; and

WHEREAS, As a country based on freedom and opportunity, regardless of creed, race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, and any other factors of identity, we must demonstrate equal opportunity in our Armed Forces, while maintaining the standard of respect for other persons our military has set; and

WHEREAS, Our military exists to serve and protect all people in the United States, to defend the United States Constitution, and to fight for our freedom. Expanding combat roles to women adds to our military excellence; 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 18, 2019, to March 22, 2019, inclusive, as Women's Military History Week in California; and be it further

Resolved, That the Legislature encourages Californians to recognize the hard fought contributions of women and those who identify as women to our military and our freedom, the courageous sacrifices that women and those who identify as women have made while serving our country with "sheroism," 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.