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SR-13 (2021-2022)

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ENROLLED MARCH 17, 2021

PASSED IN SENATE MARCH 15, 2021

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE— 2021–2022 REGULAR SESSION

SENATE RESOLUTION

NO. 13

Introduced by Senator Grove
(Coauthors: Senators Eggman and Melendez)

March 02, 2021

Relative to Women's Military History Week.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SR 13, Grove.

WHEREAS, Women have served bravely in every major United States conflict since the American Revolutionary War, but their courage and service have gone largely 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 1,300,000 women currently serve in the Armed Forces of the United States. 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, During the Civil War, women disguised as men fought on both sides. Women also served as spies and medical personnel. Three of the most famous women were Dr. Mary Walker, a physician and the only woman ever awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor; Clara Barton, who served at the siege of Petersburg and founded the American Red Cross; and Harriet Tubman, who was a volunteer nurse, spy, and scout for the Union Army; 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, Sergeant Leigh Ann Hester became the first woman in the United States Army to earn a Silver Star for combat valor during Operation Iraqi Freedom, after leading her soldiers on a counterattack of Anti-Iraqi Forces (AIF) who were ambushing a convoy with heavy AK-47 assault rifle fire, RPK machine gun fire, and rocket-propelled grenades. Sergeant Hester maneuvered her team through the kill zone into a flanking position where she assaulted a trench line with grenades and M203 rounds. Her actions saved the lives of numerous convoy members; 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, 2021, marks the eighth anniversary of the groundbreaking decision overturning 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, Even with the full integration of women into all branches of the military, a woman's ability to serve in combat continued to be impeded by 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, The military's first female four-star general, United States Army General Ann E. Dunwoody, cracked the military's "brass ceiling" in 2008, when she was awarded her fourth star and named commander of the United States Army Materiel Command, the unit that equips, outfits, and arms United States soldiers; and

WHEREAS, Approximately 16 percent of the total military force is made up of women, and six have held the rank of General, exemplifying the payoff for hard work that comes to people who do their best work in each and every role they take on, regardless of gender; 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, More than 9,000 female troops have earned Combat Action Badges during modern combat operations, including those in Iraq and Afghanistan, and hundreds more have earned valor awards, including the Silver Star, the Army's third-highest valor award; 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 ban was lifted, women are now training for, and serving in, infantry, armor, and short-range field artillery units and occupations, and the number receiving their Ranger Tabs continues to grow. Moreover, women in all services are also now eligible to serve as Special Operations Forces (SOF); and

WHEREAS, As with the opening of combat aviation, long-range field artillery, surface, and submarine warfare in earlier periods, full integration into all ground combat units and into the more senior ranks is a decades-long process—a process that is now underway, but was long impeded by these two policies; and

WHEREAS, The Women In Military Service For America Memorial, at the Ceremonial Entrance to Arlington National Cemetery, is the only major national memorial honoring all women who have defended America throughout history. Their patriotism and bravery are a part of our nation's heritage and are now recognized; 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; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, That the Senate hereby recognizes "Women Warriors" by proclaiming the week of March 14 to March 20, 2021, inclusive, as Women's Military History Week in California; and be it further

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

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.