

U.S. Cadet Nurse Corps Service Recognition Act

Sponsored by Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME), Sen. Angus King (I-ME), and Sen. Steve Daines (R-MT)

Background

In the midst of World War II, the United States faced a severe nursing shortage, threatening the nation's ability to fulfill civilian and military medical needs during a critical period of mobilization.¹ In response, Congress passed legislation "to provide for the training of nurses for the armed forces, governmental and civilian hospitals, health agencies, and war industries" and established the U.S. Cadet Nurse Corps in 1943.²

The Cadet Nurse Corps, an integrated, uniformed service of the Public Health Administration, provided young women with expedited nursing education. Once enrolled in the program, Cadet Nurses pledged their "service in essential nursing for the duration of the war."³ Nearly 120,000 Cadet Nurses completed the program's rigorous training, and thousands served in military hospitals, Veterans Administration hospitals, Marine Hospitals, and other public health and civilian agencies until the program ended in 1948.⁴

In 1945, the Surgeon General informed Congress that "Cadet Nurses...supplied nursepower to the military and prevented the collapse of nursing service on the home front."⁵ He continued: "we cannot measure what the loss to the country would have been if civilian nursing service had collapsed, any more than we could measure the cost of failure at the Normandy beachheads."⁶ However, in spite of their contribution, Cadet Nurses are not eligible for the same types of recognition as other civilian and military groups that served during WWII.

Legislation

To help recognize the vital service of Cadet Nurses to our nation during World War II, the bipartisan **U.S. Cadet Nurse Corps Service Recognition Act** would:

- Provide Cadet Nurses with veteran status, with an honorable discharge from service where merited;
- Provide Cadet Nurses with limited burial benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs; and
- Allow the Secretary of Defense to provide honorably discharged Cadet Nurses with a service medal.

The legislation **would not** provide still-living Cadet Nurses with Veterans Affairs pensions, healthcare benefits, or other privileges afforded to former active-duty service members.

Endorsements

American Nurses Association
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
Veterans of Foreign Wars
American Organization of Nurse Executives

¹ Federal Security Agency, Public Health Service, "The United States Cadet Nurse Corps: 1943-1948," 1950, p. 1-6, <https://archive.org/details/CadetNurseCorps1943-1948/page/n5>.

² Public Law 74-126, <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/statutes-at-large/78th-congress/session-1/c78s1ch126.pdf>.

³ USCadetNurses.org, "Cadet Nurse Pledge," <https://uscadetnurse.org/node/150>.

⁴ Rochester Regional Health, "US Cadet Nurse Corps," <https://www.rochesterregional.org/about/history/rochester-medical-museum-and-archives/digital-exhibits/us-cadet-nurse-corps>.

⁵ Cadet Nurse Corps News, "Corps Record Receives Acclaim," November 1945, <https://uscadetnurse.org/sites/default/files/cncnews-nov45.pdf>.

⁶ Gloucester Daily Times, "Our view: Cadet Nurse Corps deserves veterans status" (editorial), January 23, 2018, https://www.gloucestertimes.com/opinion/editorials/our-view-cadet-nurse-corps-deserves-veteran-status/article_bf21322d-a2b4-5db2-8856-2944b423d65c.html.