

## United States Cadet Nurse Corps Service Recognition Act of 2023

*Senators Elizabeth Warren, Susan Collins, Steve Daines, and Angus King and Representatives Mike Lawler, Brian Fitzpatrick, Chris DeLuzio, and Eleanor Holmes Norton*

**Background:** During World War II (WWII), the United States faced a shortage of nurses to meet our domestic and military needs. According to the U.S. Public Health Service, in 1943 there were approximately 17,000 vacant nursing roles in civilian hospitals. In response, that year Congress created the Cadet Nurse Corps, an integrated, uniformed service under the supervision of the U.S. Public Health Service. Nursing students were given accelerated training and subsidized nursing school tuition in exchange for “essential military or civilian nursing for the duration of the war.” Cadet Nurses worked at a variety of civilian or military hospitals, including “hospitals run by the Army, Navy, Veterans Administration, Public Health Service, and Bureau of Indian Affairs.” Approximately 120,000 women completed the Cadet Nurse Corps program and made significant contributions to wartime efforts. By September 1945, almost 85 percent of nursing students in the United States were in the Cadet Nurse Corps.

During a U.S. House Committee on Military Affairs hearing, U.S. Surgeon General Thomas Parran Jr. stated, “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 on the Normandy beachheads.” The Federal Security Agency also recognized “national recognition for rendering a vital war service” as a privilege of Cadet Nurse Corps service.

[Cadet Nurse Elizabeth "Betty" Beecher](#) was one of these incredible women. She trained as a Cadet Nurse in Boston, Massachusetts, and later served as a nurse at a Marine hospital in Staten Island, New York towards WWII's end. “We prevented a total collapse of the health care system,” she said. “Had we not stepped up and volunteered and enlisted in the Corps, I'm afraid the country would have been demoralized and our boys would have come home to a sick country.”

The U.S. Cadet Nurse Corps Service Recognition Act of 2023 would:

- Provide Cadet Nurses with honorary veteran status, with an honorable discharge from service where merited;
- Permit the Secretary of Defense to provide honorably discharged Cadet Nurses with a service medal, a burial plaque or grave marker, and other commendations to honor their service.

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, such as burial benefits in Arlington Cemetery.