

## **Remove the Stain Act of 2025**

*Senators Elizabeth Warren (D–Mass.) & Jeff Merkley (D–Or.); Rep. Jill Tokuda (D–Hawaii)*

On December 29, 1890, U.S. soldiers slaughtered hundreds of Lakota men, women, and children at Wounded Knee on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota during what came to be known as the Wounded Knee Massacre. Congress awarded twenty Medals of Honor to soldiers for the shameful acts that occurred during the Wounded Knee Massacre. The Remove the Stain Act would rescind these Medals of Honor.

### *Remove the Stain Act*

The Medal of Honor is the country’s highest military honor, awarded in the name of Congress for “gallantry beyond the call of duty.” But the soldiers’ acts of violence at Wounded Knee were not heroic; they were tragic and profoundly shameful. The 101st Congress (1989–1990) adopted a [concurrent resolution](#) acknowledging the 100th anniversary of the massacre and “expresse[d] its deep regret on behalf of the United States” for the “terrible tragedy.” The Remove the Stain Act respects and honors those who lost their lives, advances justice, and takes a step toward righting a profound wrong in our nation’s history.

Congress has rescinded Medals of Honor before. In 1916, Congress passed legislation to create a board of retired Army officers to investigate previous Medals of Honor. As a result of this review, Congress removed more than 900 recipients from the Medal of Honor Roll. Additionally, Congress has repeatedly passed legislation to review the records of certain servicemembers to award, or upgrade other medals to, the Medal of Honor.

Senators Warren and Merkley have led the Remove the Stain Act in the Senate since 2019. Former Representatives Denny Heck (D–Wash.), Deb Haaland (D–N.M.), and Paul Cook (R–Calif.) introduced the bipartisan Remove the Stain Act in the House during the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress, and former Representative Kaiali’i Kahele led the bill in the House in the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress. Representative Jill Tokuda now leads the bill in the House.

### *Support for the Remove the Stain Act*

The National Congress of American Indians, United South and Eastern Tribes Sovereignty Protection Fund, and the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe have all passed resolutions calling for the revocation of the medals. In February 2021, the South Dakota State Senate unanimously adopted a resolution calling on Congress to investigate and possibly rescind the Medals of Honor.

The Remove the Stain Act is supported by the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), the Coalition of Large Tribes (COLT), Great Plains Tribal Chairmen’s Association, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Oglala Sioux Tribe, Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Yankton Sioux Tribe, Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Tribe, Shoshone-Paiute Tribe, the Native Organizers Alliance, Four Directions Native Vote, Friends Committee on National Legislation, and the Spotted Elk, Afraid of Hawk, and LeBeau families — alongside other stakeholders. It is also supported by coalitions of veterans, including Veterans for Peace, VoteVets, and Veterans for American Ideals.