

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 126

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 94

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 126—Relative to women veterans.

[Filed with Secretary of State July 15, 2014.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 126, Atkins. Women veterans.

This measure would proclaim June 12, 2014, as Women Veterans' Day and urge all citizens to join in celebrating the many contributions of women to our military forces.

WHEREAS, Women have proudly served their country throughout all periods of the history of the United States, whether disguised as male soldiers during the American Revolution and Civil War, as nurses in World War I, or as combat helicopter pilots in Afghanistan; and

WHEREAS, Women have formally been a part of the United States Armed Forces since the inception of the Army Nurse Corps in 1901, but have informally served since the inception of our nation's military; and

WHEREAS, During the American Revolution, women served on the battlefield alongside the men, mainly as nurses, water bearers, often called "Molly Pitchers," cooks, laundresses, and saboteurs, and despite Army regulations that only men could enlist, women who wanted to join in the fighting circumvented the rules by masquerading as young men or boys; and

WHEREAS, In 1917, the Navy announced it would open enlistment to women and about 12,000 female yeomen entered the Navy and filled a variety of jobs including draftsmen, interpreters, couriers, and translators; and

WHEREAS, Three hundred seven women enlisted in the Marine Corps during World War I. Like their sisters in the Navy, they were limited to the enlisted ranks and worked mainly in Washington, D.C., doing various administrative jobs. Women's service contributions in World War I showed that they either had, or could quickly learn, nontraditional skills needed by the military; and

WHEREAS, Following Pearl Harbor, Congress authorized new women's components for each of the services and increased the number of active duty positions in the Army and Navy Nurse Corps. In May 1942, the Army was given the authority to establish the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, also known as the WAACs. The Navy, Coast Guard, and Marine Corps followed suit, but rather than making women an auxiliary component, they opted to enroll them in the reserves on the same basis as their male counterparts; and

WHEREAS, At the end of the war in 1945, of the approximately 12 million people remaining in the Armed Forces, about 280,000 were women; and

WHEREAS, With the passage of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948, women became a permanent part of the United States military, but women continued to be restricted to 2 percent of the military population. That restriction was finally lifted in 1967 with the amendment of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act, which also opened senior officer ranks to women; and

WHEREAS, The early 1990s were a historic time for women in the military with over 40,000 women deploying in support of the Persian Gulf War, making women service members more visible in the eyes of the public. In addition, in 1992, the Defense Authorization Act repealed combat exclusion laws that had prevented women from flying combat aircrafts; and

WHEREAS, Women who have served in the United States military are often referred to as "invisible veterans" because their service contributions until the 1970s went largely unrecognized by politicians, the media, academia, and the general public; and

WHEREAS, Even though women have been officially serving in the military since the creation of the Army Nurse Corps in 1901, they have not always been considered qualified for veteran status for the purpose of receiving benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs. Even after women were granted veteran status, issues of access, exclusion, and improper management of their health care still remained; and

WHEREAS, It was not until well after World War II that women who served in the military began to officially be recognized as veterans; and

WHEREAS, In the late 1970s and early 1980s, many of the contributions made by women in World War II were formally recognized through laws that granted these women with veteran status for their time in service. This opened the doors for women to take advantage of programs, opportunities, and benefits from the federal and state governments, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and other veteran service organizations; and

WHEREAS, The 1980 decennial census marked the first time that information on women veterans was ever captured in a large national survey. At the time of the 1980 decennial census, women made up just over 2 percent of the veteran population. Today, that proportion has increased to almost 8 percent; and

WHEREAS, Over the past 20 years, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has introduced initiatives designed to improve health care access and quality of care for women veterans; and

WHEREAS, In 2008, VHA's Women Veterans Health Strategic Health Care Group began a five-year plan to redesign the nation's health care delivery system for women. A fundamental component of this plan was to ensure that all women veterans had access to comprehensive primary care from skilled women's health providers; and

WHEREAS, There are currently over 2 million women veterans living in the United States and Puerto Rico and of those 2 million, 184,774 make California their home; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate thereof concurring, That the Legislature, hereby proclaims June 12, 2014, as Women Veterans' Day, and urges all citizens to join in celebrating the many contributions of women to our military forces; and be it further

Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.