AMENDMENT TO THE RULES COMMITTEE PRINT

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OFFERED BY MS. MOORE OF WISCONSIN

Add at the end the following:

DIVISION F—SIX TRIPLE EIGHT
CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL

SEC. 6001. SHORT TITLE.

This division may be cited as the “‘Six Triple Eight’ Congressional Gold Medal Act of 2020”.

SEC. 6002. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) On July 1, 1943, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed into law legislation that established the Women’s Army Corps (referred to in this section as the “WAC”) as a component in the Army. The WAC was converted from the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (referred to in this section as the “WAAC”), which had been created in 1942 without official military status. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and Mary McLeod Bethune, the founder of the National Council of Negro Women, advocated for the admittance of African-American women into the
newly formed WAC to serve as officers and enlisted personnel.

(2) Dubbed “10 percenters”, the recruitment of African-American women to the WAAC was limited to 10 percent of the population of the WAAC to match the proportion of African-Americans in the national population. Despite an executive order issued by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1941 banning racial discrimination in civilian defense industries, the Armed Forces remained segregated. Enlisted women served in segregated units, participated in segregated training, lived in separate quarters, ate at separate tables in mess halls, and used segregated recreational facilities. Officers received their officer candidate training in integrated units but lived under segregated conditions. Specialist and technical training schools were integrated in 1943. During World War II, a total of 6,520 African-American women served in the WAAC and the WAC.

(3) After several units of White women were sent to serve in the European theater of operations (referred to in this section as the “ETO”) during World War II, African-American organizations advocated for the War Department to extend the oppor-
tunity to serve overseas to African-American WAC units.

(4) In November 1944, the War Department approved sending African-American women to serve in Europe. A battalion of all African-American women drawn from the WAC, the Army Service Forces, and the Army Air Forces was created and designated as the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion (referred to in this section as the “6888th”), which was nicknamed the “Six Triple Eight”.

(5) With the exception of smaller units of African-American nurses who served in Africa, Australia, and England, the 6888th was the only African-American WAC unit to serve overseas during World War II.

(6) Army officials reported a shortage of qualified postal officers within the ETO, which resulted in a backlog of undelivered mail. As Allied forces drove across Europe, the ever-changing locations of servicemembers hampered the delivery of mail to those servicemembers. One general predicted that the backlog in Birmingham, England would take 6 months to process and the lack of reliable mail service was hurting morale.
In February 1945, the 6888th arrived in Birmingham. Upon their arrival, the 6888th found warehouses filled with millions of pieces of mail intended for members of the Armed Forces, United States Government personnel, and Red Cross workers serving in the ETO.

The 6888th created effective processes and filing systems to track individual servicemembers, organize “undeliverable” mail, determine the intended recipient for insufficiently addressed mail, and handle mail addressed to servicemembers who had died. Adhering to their motto of “No mail, low morale”, the women processed an average of 65,000 pieces of mail per shift and cleared the 6-month backlog of mail within 3 months.

The 6888th traveled to Rouen, France later in May 1945 and worked through a separate backlog of undelivered mail dating back as far as 3 years.

At the completion of their mission, the entire unit returned to the United States. The 6888th was discontinued on March 9, 1946, at Fort Dix, New Jersey.

These women faced racism and sexism, and worked in austere conditions, but were able to clear more than 18,000,000 pieces of backlog mail
for Americans in the ETO. Three died in France
and are buried in Normandy, France, while three
others were beaten in a bus station in Kentucky.

(12) According to the Department of Defense,
during the period between February 1945 and Feb-
uary 1946, the members of the “Six Triple Eight”
“displayed meritorious service while deployed to
England and France” and “conducted combat sup-
port operation which impacted the morale and wel-
fare of U.S. service members fighting across the Eu-
ropean continent”.

(13) The Department of the Army awarded its
Meritorious Unit Commendation award to the mem-
ers of the “Six Triple Eight” noting that their
“professionalism and dedication are in keeping with
the finest tradition of military service and reflect
great credit upon themselves, the Women’s Army
Corps, and the U.S. Army”.

(14) The accomplishments of the 6888th in Eu-
rope encouraged the General Board, United States
Forces, European Theater of Operations to adopt
the following premise in their study of the WAC
issued in December 1945: “[T]he national security
program is the joint responsibility of all Americans
irrespective of color or sex” and “the continued use
of colored, along with white, female military personnel is required in such strength as is proportionately appropriate to the relative population distribution between colored and white races”.

(15) The members of the “Six Triple Eight” received the European African Middle Eastern Campaign Medal, the Women’s Army Corps Service Medal, and the World War II Victory Medal for their service.

(16) While over 850 African-American women from across the United States have been documented to serve overseas with the “Six Triple Eight”, only a few are still alive including Anna Mae Wilson Robertson of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Delores L. Ruddock of Mt. Rainer, Maryland, Lena Derricott Bell King of Las Vegas, Nevada, Elizabeth Bernice Barker Johnson of Hickory, North Carolina, Maybelle Rutland Tanner Campbell of Alexandria, Virginia, Fannie Mae McClendon of Arizona, and Indiana Hunt Martin of Maryland.

SEC. 6003. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.

(a) AWARD AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President pro tempore of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements for the award, on behalf of Congress, of a single gold medal of
appropriate design in honor of the women of the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion (commonly known as the “Six Triple Eight”) in recognition of—

(1) the pioneering military service of those women;

(2) the devotion to duty of those women; and

(3) the contributions made by those women to increase the morale of all United States personnel stationed in the European theater of operations during World War II.

(b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For the purposes of the award described in subsection (a), the Secretary of the Treasury (referred to in this division as the “Secretary”) shall strike the gold medal with suitable emblems, devices, and inscriptions, to be determined by the Secretary.

(e) SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—After the award of the gold medal under subsection (a), the medal shall be given to the Smithsonian Institution, where the medal shall be available for display, as appropriate, and made available for research.

(2) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that the Smithsonian Institution should make the gold medal received under paragraph (1) available elsewhere, particularly at—
(A) appropriate locations associated with
the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion;

(B) the Women in Military Service for
America Memorial;

(C) the United States Army Women’s Mu-
seum;

(D) the National World War II Museum
and Memorial; and

(E) any other location determined appro-
priate by the Smithsonian Institution.

SEC. 6004. DUPLICATE MEDALS.

Under such regulations as the Secretary may pre-
scribe, the Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in
bronze of the gold medal struck under section 6003 at a
price sufficient to cover the costs of the medals, including
labor, materials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead ex-
penses.

SEC. 6005. NATIONAL MEDALS.

(a) NATIONAL MEDALS.—Medals struck under this
division are national medals for purposes of chapter 51
of title 31, United States Code.

(b) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of section
5134 of title 31, United States Code, all medals struck
under this division shall be considered to be numismatic items.