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R 301443Z MAY 23 MID120000147514U
FM CNO WASHINGTON DC
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PASS TO OFFICE CODES:
FM CNO WASHINGTON DC//DNS//
INFO CNO WASHINGTON DC//DNS//
MSGID/GENADMIN/CNO WASHINGTON DC//

SUBJ/75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE WOMEN'S ARMED SERVICES INTEGRATION ACT//

RMKS/1. 12 June 2023 marks the 75th anniversary of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act (WASIA), which President Harry S. Truman signed into law on 12 June 1948. This Act legally granted women the right to serve as permanent, regular members of the U.S. Military Services.

2. Women had supported and served in the Military Services for generations, including as reservists in World War I and World War II. Over 350,000 women aided operations during World War II, and their dedication prompted congressional leaders to consider the retention of women after the war. Such legislation would overrule temporary approval during wartime and allow women to aid in peacetime and war readiness as members of both the reserves and, notably, the regular services. In 1946, the Army requested that the Women's Army Corps would remain part of their permanent personnel. The idea of women's permanent inclusion in Military Services received widespread support from the Navy, Marine Corps, and War Department.

3. The 80th Congress debated the legislation for 2 years from 1946 through 1948. In her speech to the U.S. House of Representatives, Representative Margaret Chase Smith of Maine declared, "The Issue is simple-either the armed services have a permanent need of women officers and enlisted women or they do not. If they do, then women must be given permanent status." Those opposed to the bill argued women should compose separate reserve forces within each branch. Military leadership, however, presented a united front on integrating women as part of the permanent armed forces, both active and reserve.

4. While the WASIA granted permanent status to women in all Military Services (including the newly formed Air Force), several provisions limited women's roles and benefits in the Navy. Women were capped at two percent of all personnel, and those with children under age 18 were ineligible for service or honorably discharged. Women were eligible for billets centered primarily in clerical, nursing, and aviation support, but could not "be assigned to duty in aircraft while such aircraft are engaged in combat missions, or onboard vessels of the Navy other than hospital ships."

5. Navy leadership supported the legislation and used the experiences of the Women Accepted for Volunteer Service (WAVES) during World War II to showcase women's contributions to the fleet. Many of these same women, such as Captain Joy Bright Hancock, director of the WAVES, also played a key role in

advocating for the legislation, soliciting Navy leadership support, and undertaking preparations for congressional hearings. In his statement to the 80th Congress on 2 July 1947, Fleet Admiral C. W. Nimitz explained the advantages of including women in the Navy's permanent structure, arguing that women delivered immediate and direct aid in increasing the overall efficiency of the Navy and provided a flexible and well-trained core of Sailors. In addition to the Regular Navy, women's inclusion in the Reserve would provide an essential reservoir of personnel that permitted rapid mobilization if and when necessary. As he stated, "In any future war, it will be mandatory to have at our command immediately all possible resources. Womanpower is one of them."

6. The WASIA marked the beginning of full participation and advancement for women in the Military Services. Though limitations remained and required further legislation to repeal pregnancy disqualification and combat exclusion, the Act showed an important step toward inclusion that would come to define the Navy of the present and future. As we celebrate the 75th anniversary of this momentous legislation and advancements made since its adoption, we acknowledge the contributions of all women who have served and continue to serve vital roles in the U.S. Navy. Let us echo the spirit of Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III that, "To ensure that we continue to have the strongest fighting force in the world, we must draw on the full power of all our people."

7. Mission. Recognize the impact the WASIA had on equal rights and opportunities for women in the Navy and the progress the Navy has made since its enactment as law in 1948.

8. Commander's Intent

a. Purpose. Commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act (WASIA).

b. Method. Command-centric execution of a coordinated Navy-wide WASIA commemoration.

(1) Use available Navy outreach assets to maximum extent possible.

(2) Be guided by, and supportive of, the Navy's strategic messaging.

c. End State: The commemoration of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act becomes a standard community outreach and Navy pride event for all Sailors, past and present.

9. Administrative

a. Suggested resources for this commemoration:

(1) S. 1641, A Bill to establish the Women's Army Corps [and] to authorize the enlistment and appointment of women in the Navy and Marine Corps (Women's Armed Services Integration Act), July 16, 1947 | U.S. Capitol - Visitor Center ([visitthecapitol.gov](https://www.visitthecapitol.gov))
<https://www.visitthecapitol.gov/artifact/s-1641-bill-establish-womens-army-corps-and-authorize-enlistment-and-appointment-women>

(2) The Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948 ([usmcu.edu](https://www.usmcu.edu))
<https://www.usmcu.edu/Research/Marine-Corps-History-Division/People/Women-in-the-Marine-Corps/The-Womens-Armed-Services-Integration-Act-of-1948/>

(3) Flygirls, Women Mechs, and Lady Pilots: The Multi-Generational, Multi-Service Effort to End Combat Exclusion in Aviation > The Sextant > Article View (dodlive.mil)
<https://usnhistory.navylive.dodlive.mil/Recent/Article-View/Article/3370058/flygirls-women-mechs-and-lady-pilots-the-multi-generational-multi-service-effor/>

(4) Truman and Women's Rights - Truman Library Institute

<https://www.trumanlibraryinstitute.org/truman-and-womens-rights/>
(5) Statement by Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III on International Women's Day > U.S. Department of Defense > Release
<https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3322270/statement-by-secretary-of-defense-lloyd-j-austin-iii-on-international-womens-day/>
(6) Hancock, B. J. (1972). Lady In the Navy. United States Naval Institute.
(7) Naval History and Heritage Museum Library. Oral History. The WAVES. U.S. NAVY Retired.
(8) Naval History and Heritage Museum Library. Oral History. Reminiscences of the WAVES (Officers of World War II). Vol. II.
b. Public Affairs Guidance: This is an active public affairs posture event.

10. Point of contact. NHHC POC is Dr. James Willson-Quayle, james.willson-quayle.civ@us.navy.mil.

11. Released by Mr. Andrew S. Haeuptle, Director, Navy Staff.

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