

TESTIMONY TO MAKE JUNE 12TH AS WOMEN VETERANS DAY.

TODAY I AM USING MY VOICE FOR ALL MY SISTERS WHO HAVE SERVED OUR COUNTRY THRU THE YEARS. GENERATIONS OF WOMEN VETERANS HAVE SERVED IN AMERICA'S WARS AND CONFLICTS THROUGHOUT OUR HISTORY.

DURING WORLD WAR 1, ABOUT 35,000 WOMEN OFFICALLY SERVED AS NURSES AND SUPPORT STAFF. IN WORLD WAR II, 140,000 WOMEN SERVED IN THE US ARMY AND THE WOMEN'S ARMY CORPS PERFORMING CRITICAL JOBS SUCH AS MILITARY INTELLIGENCE, PARACHUTE RIGGING JUST TO NAME A COUPLE. OVER 1,000 WOMEN FLEW AIRCRAFT FOR THE WOMEN'S AIRFORCE SERVICE PILOTS.

IN 1948, CONGRESS PASSED THE WOMEN'S ARMED FORCES SERVICE INTERGRATION ACT GRANTING WOMEN PERMANENT STATUS ENTITLING US TO VETERANS BENEFITS.

DURING THE VIETNAM WAR, 7000 AMERICAN MILITARY WOMEN SERVED IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. ONE OF THEM, WAS LT. SHARON LANE WHO WAS BORN IN ZANESVILLE OH AND RAISED IN CANTON, OH. SHE WAS AN ALL AMERICAN GIRL WHO HAD A DESIRE TO SERVE. SHARON AN ARMY NURSE FOUND HERSELF WORKING AT AN ARMY HOSPITAL IN VIETNAM IN 1969, SHE WORKED LONG HOURS, TOOK EXTRA SHIFTS TO CARE FOR THE WOUNDED SOLDIERS. ON JUNE 8, 1969 SHE DIED WHEN HER HOSPITAL WAS STRUCK BY MULTIPLE ROUNDS OF MORTARS. IN 1978, THE FIRST WOMEN WERE ADMITTED TO AMERICA'S SERVICE ACADEMIES. DURING THE PERSIAN GULF WAR IN 1991, MORE THAN 41,000 WOMEN WERE DEPLOYED TO THE COMBAT ZONE.

IN 1990, SOME 40,000 AMERICAN MILITARY WOMEN WERE DEPLOYED DURING OPERATION DESERT SHIELD AND OPERATION DESERT STORM. TODAY OVER 700,000 WOMEN HAVE SERVED POST 9/11, INCLUDING OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM AND OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM.

WOMEN VETERANS CONTINUE TO BREAK DOWN BARRIERS TODAY MODELING NATIONAL SERVICE FOR GENERATIONS TO FOLLOW,

EACH YEAR THE NUMBER OF WOMEN SERVING OUR COUNTRY INCREASES. BY THE YEAR 2043 WOMEN ARE PROJECTED TO MAKE UP 16.3% OF ALL LIVING VETERANS.

TODAY I ASK YOU TO HONOR ALL WOMEN VETERANS FROM YESTERDAY, TODAY AND FOR TOMORROW BY DECLARING JUNE 12TH, AS WOMEN'S VETERANS DAY.