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Testimony in Favor of HB 0370

6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion Day

Chair Pena-Melynk, Vice Chair Ariana Kelly and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee

I am writing to respectfully request a favorable report on House Bill 0370 which proposes to establish a day of recognition for the 688th Central Postal Directory Battalion. As a proud, life-long resident of Maryland, the CEO of Maryland's oldest Black-owned business, and a supporter of our nation's veterans, I believe that this legislation is an important way to honor the sacrifices and service of these brave women—one of whom was my aunt Vashti Murphy Matthews.

The 688th Central Postal Directory Battalion was a crucial part of our military's efforts during World War II, providing essential mail services to American troops stationed overseas. These soldiers worked tirelessly to ensure that letters and packages from home made their way to the front lines, bringing comfort and connection to those who were fighting for our country's freedom. Their motto was "no mail, low morale."

Despite the vital role that the 688th played in the war effort, their contributions have often been overlooked or forgotten. That is why I believe that it is so important to establish a day of recognition for this remarkable battalion, to honor their service and sacrifice and to ensure that their legacy is remembered by future generations.

The AFRO was instrumental in identifying these brave soldiers by publishing many of their names, as well as nearly 50 stories about their service (see selected examples below). By establishing a day to honor the 688th Central Postal Directory Battalion, we can show our appreciation for their selflessness and dedication and ensure that their story is told for years to come. I urge you to support Maryland HB370 and help to recognize the important contributions of these American heroes.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kind regards,

Frances Murphy Draper

Frances Murphy Draper

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831 Wac's in France

Afro-American (1893-); Jun 23, 1945; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Black Newspaper Collection
pg. 13

831 Wac's in France

ROVEN, France (ANP)—Maj. Charity Adams and her unit of WAC's arrived here recently and are now redirecting the mail for soldiers who have returned to the states since V-E day.

The WACs, numbering 31 officers and 800 enlistees, make up the 6888th Central Postal directory and are the first colored members of American's Women Army corps to be seen here.

Maj. Adams, a former Columbia, S.C., mathematics teacher, and her outfit were welcomed by several of the army units here. Pfc. Geraldine Beaumont of Chicago met her husband, 1st Sgt. Paul Beaumont, here.

Marva Gets Flowers from Chicago Woman

CHICAGO (ANP)—Mrs. Marva Louis Barrow, was honored here Sunday by a committee of the women's committee of the South Side service men's center, headed by Mme. Marjorie Stewart Joyner, head of Mme. C. J. Walker's Beauty College.

Mrs. Louis, who made her initial appearance in the role of singer at the Regal theatre last week, received a large basket of beautiful flowers as she was about to take her final bow for the third show.

The floral presentation, Mme. Joyner said, was in honor of the war work Mrs. Louis has done and a welcome to Chicago's south side as a stage celebrity.

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200 WAC Postal Unit Members Back After 2 Years Overseas
Afro-American (1893-), Mar 23, 1946, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Black Newspaper Collection
pg. 12

200 WAC Postal Unit Members Back After 2 Years Overseas

CAMP KILMER, N.J.—Two hundred members of the 6888th Central Postal Directory of the WAC descended on this New York Port of Embarkation Center on Friday morning, the last of the original contingent excepting nine, to leave Paris.

The GI women had docked at 9:50 a.m. at New York City aboard the S.S. Claymont Victory. Their personnel included 189 enlisted women and 11 officers.

Most of them had been overseas since February, 1945, although many had been as long as three years in the service.

Howard Grad Commands

Capt. Mary Kearney of 406 Newfield Ave., Bridgeport, Conn., commanding officer and a Howard University graduate, stated that the girls were most impressed with the excellent racial attitude found in Paris.

"The girls handled everything from foot lockers to first class mail in carrying out their duties as members of a postal unit," she said. The directory cleared all mail in and out of the European Theater of Operations, she explained.

Capt. Kearney entered the Army in July, 1942, was commissioned a second lieutenant at Fort De Moines, Ia., shortly afterwards, and received her present rank at Fort Devens, Mass., in 1943.

9 Remain Overseas

Of the nine wacs left overseas, six are in Paris completing specialized Army courses, two are in England, and one in Biarritz, France, all under the same GI training.

Other officers interviewed were Capt. Bernie Henderson of Xenia, Ohio, commander of troops, and First Lt. Frances E. Flatts of New York City, information and education officer.

Among the enlisted personnel interviewed:

Pfc. Elouise Rice, 2013 St. Elmo Ave., Chattanooga, Tenn., was employed at the Oak Ridge, Tenn., atom bomb plant before entering the service 22 months ago.

"I just called home and I feel fine," she said.

Paris Calls

Paris and romance appealed to Pfc. Cleola Taylor of 225 N. 59th St., Philadelphia, so much that she stated, "I expect to return as soon as possible after my discharge." She added that she intends to wed a Parisian sculptor.

Sgt. Hilda P. Griggs, Box 33, Delair, N.J., a former Philadelphia department store clerk, who has been in the Army 27 months, said that she entered the service after five of her brothers had been inducted.

"Four are now home," she stated, "but one is stationed in China with the Navy."

Acting first sergeant of the

group was M/Sgt. Mary E. Buser of 2343 W. Turner St., Philadelphia. She has served 32 months in the Army.

Pfc. Elaine Isaacs of 738 Lafayette St., Brooklyn, N.Y., who served 27 months in the WAC, like several others, was inspired to enlist after her brother had entered the services.

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30 ETO Wac's Discharges

Afro-American (1893-); Dec 1, 1945; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Black Newspaper Collection
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30 ETO Wac's Get Discharges

FORT DIX, N.J. — The 1262nd Separation Center here listed 30 WACs among the discharges last week, all recent arrivals from the ETO as members of the 6888th Postal Unit. They were:

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

From Washington — S/Sgt. Irma L. Campbell, 2011 Benning Rd., N.E.; Sgt. Gertrude V. Hall, 107 E St., S.E.; Pfc. Lillie B. Harrison, 3310 Hampshire Ave., N.W.; Pvt. Sarah E. Williams, 1331 T St., N.W.; Cpl. Susan V. Crabtree, 502 34th St., N.E.; Pfc. Olive K. Dedaux, 529 Gresham Pl.; Pfc. Elsie Givens, 414 Elm St., N.W.; Pfc. Sarah B. Gary, 2301 A St., N.W.; Pfc. Hattie Lee;

PENNSYLVANIA

From Philadelphia — T/Sgt. Catherine A. King, 1350 S. Bouvier, St.; Pfc. Marian R. Grundy, 5832 Spring St.; S/Sgt. Ina G. McRae, 4000 Reno St.; Pfc. Thelma W. Green, 1930 Montrose St.; T/5 Arena T. Glover, 719 Budd St.; S/Sgt. Eunice V. Williams, 504 N. 55th St.; From Belle Vernon — Pfc. Bebe C. Johnson, 513 Bluff St.; From Willow Grove — T/5 Elaine V. Jones, 230 Glendale Ave.; From Darby — T/Sgt. Rhoda A. Daniel, 210 N. 10th St.;

NEW YORK

From New York City — S/Sgt. Ethel C. Loving, 92 Morningside Ave.; From the Bronx — S/Sgt. Theodora Palmer, 811 E. 168th St.; and T/5 Myrtle A. Rhoden, 1370 Boston Rd.; From Jamaica — Pfc. Edith J. Armistead, 109 169th St.; From Corona — T/Sgt. Lillian V. Jones, 3217 103th St.;

NEW JERSEY

From Plainfield — Pvt. Johnita H. Johnson, 640 W. Third St.; From Paterson — Sgt. Willene Johnson, 19 Godwin Ave.; From Elizabeth — Pfc. Harriet A. Love, 1009 E. Grand St.; From Moorestown — Cpl. Laura A. Brooks, 533 N. Church St.; From Newark — T/5 Georgina Morton, 44 Somerset St., and Sgt. Beulah E. Robinson, 89 Bergen St.; From Woodbridge — S/Sgt. Daisy B. Dinkins, 100 New St.

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Colored WACs Finish Third in ETO Softball Tournament

Afro-American (1893-); Oct 13, 1945; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Black Newspaper Collection
pg. 23

Colored WACs Finish Third in ETO Softball Tournament

ROUEN, France—Winning the regional softball championship, the Company "A" softball team representing the 6888th Central Postal Directory, all colored Wac battalion serving overseas, played in the ETO championship tournament which was held in Nice, France, August 28 through September 2, taking third place.

Displaying outstanding sportsmanship, the Company "A" team, was without a doubt to all spectators the best team of the eight entering the rivalry. The "A" team in the regional tournament, played in Namur, Belgium, defeating the Namur Wacs 2-1. The team shut out the Brussels team 13-0 to take the regional honors which sent them to Nice, France, to play for the ETO championship.

Company "A's" first win was over the 9th Air Force 10, where the team tallied five runs in the fifth for an 8-4 victory. On the second day Company A defeated the Paris Signal team 11-5.

Included on the team are:

Pfc. Agnes E. Barnes, Chaptico Post Office, St. Mary's Co., Md., is center fielder on the team.

Pfc. Dorothy D. Jackson, 139 Pringdale Ave., Wheeling, W. Va., daughter of Mrs. Susie Jackson of the same address, is catcher on the team.

Pfc. Mary E. Rozier, 826 Findlay Street, Cincinnati, Ohio, daughter of Mrs. Alverise King of the same ad-

dress, is second baseman.

Pfc. Nan Jones, 506 E. St. James Street, Tarboro, N.C., daughter of Mrs. Rosa Jones of the same address, is shortstop on the team.

S/Sgt. Amanda F. Thomas, 276 East 3rd Ave., Williamson, W. Va., daughter of Mrs. Powell L. Hylton, Martinsville, Va., play left field.

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Five WAC Officers Get Promotions

Afro-American (1893-); Nov 10, 1945; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Black Newspaper Collection
pg. 12

Five WAC Officers Get Promotions

ROUEN, France—Five second lieutenants of the 6888th Central Postal Directory were recently elevated to the rank of first lieutenant. They are First Lts. Hazel E. Craddock, Des Moines, Iowa; Gussye D. Stewart, Chicago; Vivian N. Elzie, Chrisfield, Pa.; Julia A. Rich, Media, Pa., and Bertie M. Edwards, Danville, Va.

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General Davis Greets First Overseas Wacs

Signal Corps radio telephoto from London
Afro-American (1893-); Feb 24, 1945; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Black Newspaper Collection
pg. 1

General Davis Greets First Overseas Wacs



Brig. Gen. B. O. Davis welcomes Pvt. Nispa Tankard of 509 W. 159th Street, N.Y.C. (left), the first member of the all-colored Wac Postal unit to step onto British soil, while Maj. Charity Adams of Columbia, S.C., commanding officer of the battalion, looks on. The unit will handle the Army postal directory service for the entire European theatre. — Signal Corps radio telephoto from London.

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1st black WACS gather to reminisce

Afro-American (1893-); Oct 13, 1984; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Black Newspaper Collection
pg. 3



Violet O. Moore of Brooklyn, NY (L) greets Louise Shepard-Bentley of Phoenix, AZ (R) and Inez Stroud of Greensboro, NC in Atlanta Oct. 3. The three women are attending a meeting of the Women Army Corps (WACS). About 200 veterans

of the WACS were in attendance in Atlanta this year. These women served in World War II under the toughest of handicaps: being black, female and volunteers in the military when it was strictly segregated by race and sex.

1st black WACS gather to reminisce

ATLANTA — They are the few, the proud, and the achievers—the first black women to join the racially and sexually segregated U.S. Army in World War II.

“Segregation was a part of our lives. We were always conscious of it, but you tried to achieve. It was a challenge to do better,” Gladys Schuster-Carter said last week. The group has no name or officers, but gets together every two years to reminisce.

“Most of us are delighted to see each other again,” said Schuster-Carter. “The first and second days we talk about the Army and the way it used to be. The third and fourth days we talk about our grandchildren.”

She said the Army’s first black women were a special breed.

“Whatever we did, we wanted to be the best. We had to be twice

as good to be accepted and be recognized,” said Schuster-Carter.

“We remember the old times, we talk about the days of the march, the good times and the bad times of being in Army service.”

Schuster-Carter, a 62-year-old veteran from Hudson, N.Y., was first a member of the Women’s Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC), which was later shortened to the WAC when it was officially absorbed into the Army.

She served in the 6888th Postal Directory unit, the first all-black troops to go to England. They were stationed at Birmingham and later transferred to Rouen, France.

“Every WAC was a volunteer and we are very proud of that,” Schuster-Carter said. “The type

of women who would volunteer was usually pretty self confident. When they have come out, they have done some wonderful things.”

Schuster-Carter worked with the New York State Division of Youth for 25 years before retiring in 1977.

Ann Chaney, 64, of the Bronx, is proud of launching a group called Literacy Volunteers of America with American Telephone and Telegraph before she retired after 37 years. The organization teaches adults who never learned to read and now has 125,000 volunteers in 28 states.

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AFRO's Murphy-Matthews Among Those Honored For WWII Service

by AFRO Staff December 20, 2018

By Mark F. Gray, AFRO Staff Writer, mgray@afro.com

Despite the racism and oppression from a nation that treated them as something other than full citizens, the hidden figures of World War II proved to be a group of resilient African American women who fought to serve a nation reluctant to give them the chance. The unheralded soldiers were finally given their honor for service to the United States military with a member of the AFRO's founding family among them.

Among 855 soldiers honored for their service is Vashti Murphy-Matthews, one of the five daughters of Carl Murphy, who was AFRO Publisher from 1922-1967. Vashti rarely talked to her children about her experiences during the war but influenced her son Rodger Matthews to become a career soldier who retired as a Lieutenant Colonel after 25 years in the U.S. Army.



Members of the Murphy-Matthews family stand in front of the statue honoring the 688th U.S. Army Postal

Directory Battalion. L to R. Kamryn Matthews-Williams (great grand-daughter), Rodger (son), Rodger M. Matthews (grandson), Carol D. Matthews (spouse of son Rodger Matthews), Dr. Rayna Whetstone (granddaughter). (Courtesy Photo)

"We couldn't be prouder of what our mother did to serve this country," Matthews tells the AFRO. "She was extremely proud to have worn the uniform and it's beyond words to describe this honor that was long overdue for her and all the ladies of the 688th battalion."

Matthews, a 1974 graduate of Morgan State, was encouraged by his mother to join the College's ROTC on campus which was during the height of the Vietnam War. Her guidance was his motivation to become an aviator for three decades.



Vashti Murphy Matthews, Robert William Matthews III (US Coast Guard, WWII) (Courtesy Photo)

"She knew that if I graduated after serving in ROTC at Morgan, I could enter the military as an officer," Matthews adds.

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The ladies of the 6888th U.S. Army Postal Directory Battalion were remembered for their contributions to the victorious war efforts with a monument that was dedicated in their honor during ceremonies November 30 at the Buffalo Soldier Monument Park in Fort Leavenworth, Ks. The statue features a 25-inch Bronze bust of the unit's Commanding Officer, Lt. Col. Charity Adams (Earley). Its eight black granite panels highlight the unit's lineage, and on the back panel is an alphabetical list, by states, of the original group of 855 African American ladies assigned to the unit during the war.

Helping ensure the mail was delivered to troops during the international upheaval made this Battalion's impact pivotal. After limited contact with friends and family back home, motivation for the troops was hard to come by. Their assignment was to sort and redirect the delivery of the millions of backlogged letters and packages that had all but ceased to be delivered before their arrival.



Vashti Murphy Matthews children who attended the memorial ceremony. Rodger Murphy Matthews (LTC Ret), Martha Elizabeth Murphy Matthews Schuler (aka Betty Schuler). (Courtesy Photo)

This battalion was stationed between Birmingham, England, Rouen and Paris, France. Their role was vital to the United States soldier's psyche as they faced perilous conditions while assisting in the defense of democracy overseas. The "six triple eight", as they were known, were instrumental in successfully fulfilling the mission to sort and clear a more than two-year backlog of mail in the European Theater of Operations (ETO).



6888th Postal Bn, photo taken in Great Britain, Vashti is middle row, 4th from left. (Courtesy Photo)

The resilience of the women who stuck to the motto, "no mail, no morale" was tested. When they arrived in Europe the ladies worked in converted aircraft hangars with no heat during an extremely cold winter. The 6888th Battalion was segregated and wasn't allowed to sleep, shower or eat in the same facilities as the other female personnel or soldiers. They still managed to devise a system that got the stacks of mail that were packed into three air hangars, delivered by creating and maintaining information cards for soldiers. Each shift averaged 65,000 pieces of mail processed, which cleaned out the backlog in just three months.

"She would be proud of all the ladies who sacrificed themselves to improve the morale of soldiers by their efforts to clean out the European Theatre," Matthews said.

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Remembering the Instrumental Black Women Who Served in WWII

by [Special to the AFRO](#) February 16, 2018

Years' worth of backlog mail was stacked from floor to ceiling in warehouses throughout Birmingham, England in February 1945. The letters and packages were sent from loved ones to soldiers in the European Theater of Operations (ETO) of World War II.

Organized to tackle the problem, the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion, an all-Black, all female military unit was formed, but not without conflict. Also nicknamed, "The Six-Triple Eight," the unit's determination to overcome strife and complete their mission resonated with Edna Cummings, a retired Colonel of the United States Army.



Millie Dunn Veasey, 100, served as a staff sergeant with the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion, becoming a military trailblazer, educator, and Civil Rights icon. (Courtesy Photos)

"It was more than just standing up to the officers and the Red Cross in Europe . . . this started back in the United States when Black women were fighting for equality," Cummings told the *AFRO*, referring to the concerns that led to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s.

The Women's Army Auxiliary Corps was converted into the Women's Army Corps (WAC) and was created by a law signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on July 1, 1943.

First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt along with civil rights leader and advisor to the War Department, Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune, championed for the inclusion of Black women in WAC to serve overseas.

In November 1944, the War Department "acquiesced" or reluctantly agreed to enlist Black women according to the Women of the 6888th website, a subset of The Buffalo Soldier Educational and Historical Committee.

The postal battalion consisted of 824 enlisted personnel and 31 officers, all Black, who were recruited from the WAC, the Army Service Forces, and the Army Air Forces. Major (later Lieutenant Colonel) Charity Adams Earley was selected to command the battalion.

"They went to the recruitment station and they were barred from applying, one lady had to move to Washington just to apply so this was the beginning of a civil rights movement that people don't talk about," Cummings said.

Cummings, also a member of the Buffalo Soldier committee in the East Coast, Washington D.C. area, explained how the military has been on the forefront of integration. "Before the formal movement of integration happened in terms of what history talks about Civil Rights Movement made it a law to

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discriminate," Cummings told the *AFRO*. "You had a whole fraction, a group of Black women, Mary McLeod Bethune, with the help of Roosevelt and his commander standing up for the rights of these women," she said.

On February 3, 1945, the postal battalion boarded the ship, the *Ile de France*, headed to Britain and later arrived in Glasgow, Scotland. The women travelled by train to Birmingham, England for their first assignment. "I personally feel that when they boarded those ships to Europe they parted the ocean so the rest of us could follow through," Cummings said.

Their motto of "No Mail, Low Morale" served as motivation to get the undelivered mail to their appropriate recipients. Work was constant as the unit members were organized into three separate shifts, seven days a week. Still a segregated unit, the women had to eat and sleep in different locations from the White male soldiers.

The American Red Cross did not welcome the Black WACs and in turn Major Adams refused their offer of equipment for a separate recreational facility. When the back log of mail was cleared, the postal battalion sailed to France on June 9, 1945. They arrived in Le Havre and then took a train to Rouen where they encountered another back log of mail in which they cleared, too.

In October 1945 the 6888th moved to Paris where their officers were quartered in the *Hôtel États-Unis*, and the enlisted women were quartered in the *Hôtel Bohy-Lafayette*. Due to the end of World War II, the battalion was reduced by nearly 300 personnel, with over 200 more women eligible for discharge in January 1946. By February 1946, the remainder of the unit returned to the United States and was disbanded at Fort Dix, New Jersey.

The women were college educated and went on to pursue successful careers and remain active activists for civil rights of Blacks. "So, you have very highly skilled, highly educated population who came back and became active in the community," Cummings said.

However, upon their return, Cummings noted that the women did not receive any acknowledgement of their service.

As a member of The Buffalo Soldier Educational and Historical Committee, Cummings is working to help build a monument in honor of the women who served in The Six -Triple Eight.

The committee's goal is to raise \$70,000 by the end of May. Once \$70,000 is raised, the process of building the monument and requesting proper paperwork from the secretary of the Army can occur.

Cummings said the monument is an act of, "gratitude and appreciation for their hard work."

She believes these women have paved the way for others to partake in opportunities.

"If it hadn't been for their contributions we wouldn't have the success that we have not just for White women or Blacks, but for the underrepresented population in society as a whole," Cummings said.

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President Biden signs Congressional Gold Medal Honor into law for women of 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion

by [Deborah Bailey](#) Special to the AFRO March 21, 2022



Members of the 6888th battalion stand in formation in Birmingham, England, in 1945. The women cleared a backlog of mail that reconnected the lines of communication for millions of service members. (U.S. Army Women's Museum via AP, File)

By Deborah Bailey,
Special to the AFRO

President Joe Biden signed into law this week legislation passed by Congress last month awarding the Congressional Gold Medal to the Black Women members of the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion.

The iconic women's military unit known as the "Six Triple Eight" of the Women's Army Corps served in the US and Europe where they sorted and routed mail for millions of American service members and civilians.

Legislation honoring the Six Triple Eight was sponsored by Senators Jerry Moran (R-Kan) and Jacky Rosen (D-Nev.) in the Senate and Congresswoman Gwen

Moore (WI-04) and Congressman Jake LaTurner (KS-02) in the House of Representatives.

"I wish more of the 6888th members were here, and I hope that I'm still here. That will be a great day," said 6888th veteran Ms. Lena King, in anticipation of the ceremony that will be held at a later date.



Captain Abbie N. Campbell and Major Charity Adams inspect the first contingent of African American WACs sent overseas shortly after their arrival in England, 15 February 1945. (National Archives)

"The Congressional Gold Medal is the nation's gratitude for the 6888th Battalion and the thousands of African American women who served in the Army during WWII," said Col. Edna W. Cummings, 6888th Advocate.

"Their service will never be forgotten as soldiers and trailblazers for gender and racial equality," Cummings added.

"The women of the Six Triple Eight have earned a special place in history for their service to our nation, and as of today, their sacrifice is enshrined into law with the highest distinction Congress can bestow," said Sen. Moran.

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"I'm pleased that legislation to award the Six Triple Eight with the Congressional Gold Medal is officially signed into law. After eight decades, these brave women will finally get the recognition they deserve for their heroic service to our nation during World War II," said Rep. LaTurner.

expression of national appreciation for distinguished achievements and contributions.

The process will begin with the design of a special coin by the US Mint in collaboration with advocates of the Six Triple Eight Unit. The process can take up to a year.

Once the coin has been commissioned, formal planning of the Congressional Gold Medal Ceremonies will begin.



WACs from the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion take part in a parade in Rouen, France, on 27 May 1945, following a ceremony honoring Joan of Arc. (National Archives)

"I am beaming knowing that the Six Triple Eight Congressional Gold Medal Act is now signed into law," said Rep. Moore, whose district includes living 6888th member Anne Mae Wilson Robertson. "I also want to thank the advocates whose work ensures that this story of sacrifice was not lost to history," she said.

"After eight decades, these brave women will finally get the recognition they deserve for their heroic service to our nation during World War II," said Rep. LaTurner.

Living members of the women's battalion will join with their families for the Congressional Gold Medal Ceremony honoring the unit. The Medal is the highest