

Remove the Stain Act

Senator Elizabeth Warren (D–Mass.), Senator Jeff Merkley (D–Ore.), and Representative Kaiuli ‘i Kahele (D–Hawaii)

On December 29, 1890, U.S. soldiers slaughtered hundreds of Lakota men, women, and children at Wounded Knee on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota during what came to be known as the Wounded Knee Massacre. Congress awarded twenty Medals of Honor to soldiers for the shameful acts that occurred during the Wounded Knee Massacre. The Remove the Stain Act would rescind these Medals of Honor.

The Remove the Stain Act

The Medal of Honor is the country’s highest military honor, awarded in the name of Congress for “gallantry beyond the call of duty.” But the soldiers’ acts of violence at Wounded Knee were not heroic; they were tragic and profoundly shameful. The 101st Congress (1989–1990) adopted a [concurrent resolution](#) acknowledging the 100th anniversary of the massacre and “expresse[d] its deep regret on behalf of the United States” for the “terrible tragedy.” The Remove the Stain Act respects and honors those who lost their lives, advances justice, and takes a step toward righting a profound wrong in our nation’s history.

Congress has rescinded Medals of Honor before. In 1916, Congress passed legislation to create a board of retired Army officers to investigate previous Medals of Honor. As a result of this review, Congress removed more than 900 recipients from the Medal of Honor Roll. Additionally, Congress has repeatedly passed legislation to review the records of certain servicemembers to award, or upgrade other medals to, the Medal of Honor.

Senators Warren and Merkley first introduced the Remove the Stain Act in the Senate in November 2019. Former Representatives Denny Heck (D–Wash.), Deb Haaland (D–N.M.), and Paul Cook (R–Calif.) introduced the bipartisan Remove the Stain Act in the House last Congress.

Support for the Remove the Stain Act

The [National Congress of American Indians](#), [United South and Eastern Tribes Sovereignty Protection Fund](#), and the [Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe](#) have all passed resolutions calling for the revocation of the medals.

In February 2021, the South Dakota State Senate [unanimously adopted a resolution calling](#) on Congress to investigate and possibly rescind the Medals of Honor.

The Remove the Stain Act is supported by the Oglala Sioux Tribe, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, the Yankton Sioux Tribe, the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Tribe, the National Congress of American Indians, the Coalition of Large Tribes, United South and Eastern Tribes Sovereignty Protection Fund, the Great Plains Tribal Chairmen’s Association, HAWK1890 Survivor Descendants, Four Directions, the Wounded Knee School District, South Dakota State Senator Troy Heinert, South Dakota State Rep. Red Dawn Foster, Professor Philip J. Deloria, Ms. Dena Buffalo Waloke, Ms. Marcella LeBeau, Common Defense, Veterans for Peace, Veterans for American Ideals, and the Friends Committee on National Legislation.