

Remove the Stain Act

Senator Elizabeth Warren (D–Mass.) and Senator Jeff Merkley (D–Ore.)

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Congress has rescinded Medals of Honor before.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.

In June 2019, Representatives Denny Heck (D–Wash.), Deb Haaland (D–N.M.), and Paul Cook (R–Calif.) introduced the bipartisan Remove the Stain Act as [H.R. 3467](#).

Support for Removing the Stain

The [National Congress of American Indians](#) and the [Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe](#) have both passed resolutions calling for the revocation of the medals.

The Remove the Stain Act is supported by the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, the Oglala Sioux Tribe, the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, the National Congress of American Indians, the Great Plains Tribal Chairman’s Association, the Coalition of Large Tribes, United South and Eastern Tribes Sovereignty Protection Fund, Heartbeat At Wounded Knee 1890, the 1890 Wounded Knee Massacre Descendants Society, Four Directions, the Native Organizers Alliance, VoteVets, Common Defense, Veterans for Peace, Veterans for American Ideals, and the Friends Committee on National Legislation.