



Office of the President and
Chief Executive Officer

National Headquarters
430 17th Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20006

September 15, 2023

The Honorable Mikie Sherrill
1427 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Rep. Sherrill,

On behalf of the American Red Cross, I am delighted to share our organization's strong endorsement for H.R. 3592, your legislation to award a Congressional Gold Medal to the members of the Red Cross Supplemental Recreational Activities Overseas (SRAO) program – also known as the 'Donut Dollies' – who served honorably during the Vietnam conflict.

The American Red Cross has a long history of service in support of our nation's military members, veterans and their families, dating back to our founder, Clara Barton, who gave comfort and care to soldiers who were wounded during the Civil War. Continuing Clara's legacy, compassionate and dedicated Red Cross staff and volunteers have deployed alongside our men and women in uniform in every armed conflict since the Spanish-American War.

Between 1965 and 1972, 627 brave young women each volunteered a year of their lives to provide support for members of the U.S. military engaged in fighting in Vietnam – over eight thousand miles from home. Their mission was to serve as a "touch of home" and boost morale among service members by providing mobile recreation programs to units in remote locations, and to staff recreation centers in larger, more secure base camps.

After a mere two weeks of training in Washington, D.C. and one week in Saigon, Donut Dollies – all aged from 21 through 25 – were dispatched throughout South Vietnam and assigned to Red Cross units at military base camps, where they had to quickly learn and adapt to military leadership and operations. In addition to their morale boosting duties, many of these women supplemented their already full schedules by volunteering to visit nearby military hospitals and by supporting military programs to assist local Vietnamese orphanages and schools.

The Donut Dollies spent countless hours traveling by jeep, truck, boat, and helicopter to often remote bases throughout South Vietnam, and they were subject to the same sniper fire, mortars, and rocket attacks as service members. Yet through all the dangers and hardships they faced, these young women remained calm, courageous, and respectful of the military situation. They proved themselves brave, strong, and compassionate – and their exemplary efforts in a war zone undoubtedly helped to open doors and expand the scope of women's roles in the military.

The American Red Cross is proud to endorse H.R. 3592, and we greatly appreciate your efforts to ensure our heroic Donut Dollies receive this well-deserved recognition.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gail McGovern".

Gail J. McGovern