

History of the Women's Army Corps

Beginning in October 1940, men between 21 and 35 were drafted for military service and on December 11, 1941, the US declared war against Japan's allies, Germany and Italy. As their husbands, sons and brothers left home, many American women asked, "**how about us?**" Acting as their spokeswoman, Representative Edith Nourse Rogers (Massachusetts) introduced a bill in May 1941 calling for the creation of an all-volunteer women's corps in the Army.

Initially, members of Congress, the press and the military establishment joked about the notion of women serving in the Army, but as America increasingly realized the demands of a war on two fronts (Japan and Germany), leaders also faced an acute manpower shortage. In May 1942, the House and the Senate approved a bill creating the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) and Oveta Culp Hobby, Chief of the Women's Interest Section in the Public Relations Bureau in the War Department and a lobbyist for the WAAC bill, became its first director. Although the women who joined considered themselves *in* the Army, technically they were civilians working *with* the Army. By spring of 1943, 60,000 women had volunteered and in July 1943, a new congressional bill transformed the WAAC to the Women's Army Auxiliary (WAC), giving Army women **military status**.



pictured: Rita Black Hawk

Information taken from:

<http://chnm.gmu.edu/courses/rr/s01/cw/students/leeann/historyandcollections/history/lrnmrewwiiwac.html>