

President Wilson's call on April 2, 1917, for a declaration of war on Germany and the United States' official entry into World War I four days later gave further impetus to enlisting Indian units. On April 30, 1917, Representative Julius Kahn of California, a member of the House committee on military affairs, introduced H.R. 3970. This bill called for the immediate organization of "ten or more regiments of Indian cavalry as part of the military forces of the United States, to be known as the North American Indian Cavalry." The law indicated that Indian cavalrymen would receive citizenship upon enlistment without jeopardizing their rights to tribal identification, land, or annuities. Within two weeks, Representative Charles Carter of Oklahoma and Senator Boies Penrose of Pennsylvania introduced similar bills.

The draft and enlistment of Native American men for duty in World War I signaled an important point in the evolution of Anglo-Indian relations during the early twentieth century. Through service in the war, Indian soldiers demonstrated a degree of patriotism and loyalty that surprised many non-Indians. The war years witnessed a resurgence of racial pride among Native Americans and provided thousands of Indian soldiers with opportunities to learn new skills, a chance to escape the restrictions of Indian schools and reservation life, and a reason to be proud of their accomplishments. Consequently, service in the war, although brief, fostered a dual pride among Native Americans: pride of Indian heritage and race, and pride of being American.

-Thomas A. Britten, *American Indians in World War I: At War and at Home* (1997)
excerpt