



SWANALERT -

The National Defense Authorization Act for 2011

[SWAN](#)'s policy team has been hard at work over the past few weeks providing consultation and assistance to Members of Congress in the recent markup and vote on the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for 2011.

Most of the recent news has focused primarily on the landmark passing of the amendment repealing Don't Ask, Don't Tell, but there are also many other important changes in the bill regarding issues that SWAN has taken the lead on and that will have a profound effect on servicewomen.

Reproductive Rights

Members of the Senate Armed Services Committee stood up for the reproductive rights of women in the military and voted to repeal the ban on private funding of abortion at military hospitals and facilities. This amendment (sponsored by Sen. Roland Burris, D-III.) will strike down the policy that prohibits service women, military spouses and daughters from exercising their reproductive freedom.

For many years, a woman serving in the United States Armed Forces could use her own private funds to obtain an abortion at a U.S. military medical facility overseas. But in 1988, the Department of Defense took away that right and prohibited servicewomen and military wives and daughters from using their own funds to exercise their constitutional right to abortion except in the case of rape, incest, or where the life of the woman is endangered.

Though President Clinton reversed the private funding ban by executive order in 1993, two years later, an anti-choice Congressional majority reimposed it and enshrined it in law.



The ban on private funding or abortion on military bases has real and cruel impacts on servicewomen's lives. Here are just a few examples:

- A recent article tells a story of a Marine stationed in Fallujah who became pregnant as a result of rape. Faced with the reality of being ostracized by her fellow servicemen if she reported the rape, Amy stayed silent. With no other way to end her pregnancy, the ban left her no other choice but to attempt to self-abort using a cleaning rod from her rifle. (<http://kathrynjoyce.com/2009/12/15/military-abortion-ban-female-soldiers-not-protected-by-constitution-they-defend/>)
- The former head of obstetrics and gynecology at the Subic Bay U.S. Naval Hospital in the Philippines described families spending their life savings to travel to another country for an abortion and an enlisted woman who committed suicide because she could not get an abortion on the base. (<http://www.nytimes.com/1991/11/13/opinion/abortion-rights-not-in-the->

[military.html](#))

It is time to right this wrong. We applaud Sen. Burriss for his part in reversing this unjust and dangerous policy.

Military Sexual Assault

The current NDAA includes an entire section (Title XVI) on sexual assault in the military. This provision takes many of the recommendations from the 2009 Defense Task Force on Sexual Assault in the Military Services and requires the DoD to implement them. These recommendations will expand legal rights for service members who have been victims of sexual assault, improve training in the military related to the prevention of and response to this crime, set up telephone and online help lines, and professionalize the role of the Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC) and the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO) within the DoD. Also among its main provisions, the legislation would enable victims to access legal counsel, maintain confidentiality when speaking with Victim Advocates, and provide greater training for sexual assault prevention at every level of the armed services.



We thank Rep. Hall (D-NY), Rep. Tsongas (D-MA), Rep. Turner (R-OH) and Sen. Kerry (D-MA) for taking the lead and introducing the legislation that will take clear, sensible steps to help reduce assaults and improve care for survivors.

More than 365,000 women currently serve in the Armed Forces and more than 222,000 have been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan.

At a time when the United States is engaged in wars on two fronts, and servicewomen risk their lives every day to preserve our rights and way of life, it is imperative that we at home become involved in the policies and legislation that directly affect them.

The women of the Armed Forces deserve nothing less than our full support. Let's do what we can to make sure that the rest of Congress and the President make it happen.

Donate Now

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From all of us at SWAN, we thank you for your generous support!



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