



Service Women's Action Network (SWAN)
123 William Street, 16th floor
New York, NY 10038
www.servicewomen.org
646-602-5621 (work)
212-533-4598 (fax)

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 15, 2009

No. 0001-072009

Contact: Julianne H. Sohn
Phone: (310) 883-8956
E-mail: jules@servicewomen.org

SWAN Executive Director testifies before House Committee on Veterans' Affairs

WASHINGTON, DC -- A representative of the Service Women's Action Network will testify at a Congressional hearing for "Eliminating the gaps: Examining women veterans' issues," Thursday in the Cannon House Office Building, Washington, D.C.

Anuradha Bhagwati, SWAN Executive Director, will testify before the House Committee of Veterans' Affairs and the Subcommittee for Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs on the challenges faced by women in accessing health care and benefits, while also focusing on issues surrounding the processing of Military Sexual Trauma claims.

"Despite the progress the Veteran's Health Administration has made in addressing the recent influx of women veterans into the VA system, the challenges in delivering adequate health care services to women veterans remain numerous and daunting," Bhagwati said.

The former U.S. Marine captain works with other SWAN members to help women veterans and servicemembers who are struggling to get help through the VA medical system.

"Every day, SWAN receives calls from frustrated, disappointed and traumatized women veterans looking for legal assistance or personal support due to inadequate health care, or mistreatment and harassment by staff or male patients at VA hospitals," she said. "Many women justifiably give up on the VA, as their traumas and conditions rapidly deteriorate into drug and alcohol abuse, homelessness or suicide."

Bhagwati also plans to meet with Representative John Hall from New York, who is chairing the hearing and who introduced the COMBAT Act which attempts to ensure adequate treatment and compensation for Soldiers with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder after returning from deployments

overseas. Currently servicemembers have to prove the stressor that triggered their PTSD, even if they've already been diagnosed. The COMBAT Act lessens the burden of proof that veterans have to meet in order to get compensation from the VA.

For additional information, or to show your support, visit www.servicewomen.org.