



## SWANALERT

### **NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FAILS IN SENATE VOTE**

#### **MILITARY WOMEN ARE LEFT BEHIND**

By now you probably know that the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for FY2011 was derailed yesterday in the Senate. Most of the media coverage around the NDAA has focused on the Murphy Amendment, which would pave the way for repeal of the military's discriminatory Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT) policy. DADT has had a disproportionate impact on women and people of color, and has led to the unfair discharge of over 14,000 qualified servicemembers since 1993. What you may not know is that while the Senate denied equality for gays and lesbians in the military yesterday, it also blocked Military Sexual Trauma (MST) and reproductive rights reform, and in doing so, further endangered the lives of military women.

#### **BURRIS AMENDMENT: Choice for Women**

SWAN partnered with the ACLU and the National Women's Law Center this year in support of The Burris Amendment. This amendment would repeal the prohibition on servicewomen obtaining abortions at military medical facilities using their own funds. Abortion access is particularly important for women serving overseas who are often unable to find safe and secure abortion services outside of military facilities. The amendment, introduced by Senator Roland Burris (D-Ill.), is a revolutionary step toward ensuring abortion rights and equal medical access for servicewomen. Should the NDAA pass with the amendment intact, it will be a step toward fighting the unfair and discriminatory abortion restrictions placed on all U.S. women.

## TITLE XVI (STRONG ACT): Helping Survivors of Sexual Trauma

SWAN worked with Rep. Niki Tsongas in writing H.R.5197, the Defense Sexual Trauma Response Oversight and Good Governance Act (Defense STRONG Act), which requires the Department of Defense (DoD) to implement recommendations of the Defense Task Force on Sexual Assault in the Military Services. Provisions from the STRONG Act were written into the NDAA under "Title XVI-Improved Sexual Assault Prevention and Response in the Armed Forces". This portion of the NDAA is truly groundbreaking and includes language concerning base transfers for survivors, options for legal counsel, improving military protective orders, and professionalizing Victim Advocates, all of which would ensure the DoD works towards improving the welfare of survivors of sexual assault.

"By failing to break the NDAA filibuster, the Senate effectively set back the equality, freedoms, and protections of all women serving in our armed forces," said Anu Bhagwati, former Marine Corps Captain and Executive Director of the [Service Women's Action Network](#).

"Servicemembers are sexually assaulted every day, but the DoD has yet to make any significant progress on assisting survivors and prosecuting offenders. Furthermore, our women serving overseas continue to bear the brunt of political inaction while the Senate plays politics with their bodies."

SWAN urges supporters of military women to reach out and demand that the Senate bring The National Defense Authorization Act to a vote as soon as possible.

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*SWAN is a non-profit 501(c)3 service organization that supports, defends, and empowers today's servicewomen and women veterans of all eras, through groundbreaking advocacy initiatives and innovative, healing community programs.*

*SWAN's vision is to transform military culture by securing equal opportunity and the freedom to serve in uniform without threat of harassment, discrimination, intimidation or assault. SWAN also seeks to reform veterans' services on a national scale to guarantee equal access to quality health care, benefits and resources for women veterans and their families.*



[www.servicewomen.org](http://www.servicewomen.org)



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