

Rochester, NY – Congresswoman Louise Slaughter (NY-28), Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee, today sent a letter to Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta to commend him for announcing new policies to address sexual assault in the military. Many of the steps announced by Secretary Panetta were originally proposed by Slaughter in HR 1709, the Force Readiness and Protection Act, which she authored and introduced into the House of Representatives in May 2011.

In the letter, Slaughter wrote, " Thank you for your sincere statement this week regarding the tragedy of military sexual assault. I strongly agree with you that one sexual assault is too many, and that we have a moral duty to do everything we can to protect the men and women who sacrifice so much to protect us every single day."

She continued, "The additional steps which you announced yesterday by the Department of Defense are further evidence of your commitment to this issue. Training for and certification of sexual assault advocates is so important to ensure adequate and compassionate response to victims when sexual assaults do occur. Furthermore, your focus on training for investigators and judge advocates will be key in appropriately investigating and prosecuting these crimes. These are specific steps that I included in H.R. 1709, the Force Protection and Readiness Act, precisely because they are integral to improving the response to sexual assault and preventing it from happening in the first place."

A full copy of the letter is below.

On Wednesday, January 18, Secretary Panetta announced new policies to address sexual assault in the military. The changes announced on Wednesday include:

- The establishment of a Department of Defense Sexual Assault Advocate Certification Program, which will require military sexual assault response coordinators and victim advocates to obtain credentials for dealing with cases of sexual assault.
- Increased funding for investigators and judge advocates to receive specialized training to handle cases of sexual assault.

- Creation of one integrated data system to track sexual assault reports and monitor case management.

- An investigation, due in 120 days, on how the Department of Defense trains commanding officers and senior enlisted leaders on sexual assault prevention and response, and what can be done to strengthen that training.

Rep. Slaughter has long been a leading voice speaking out against sexual assault in the military.

In March 2004, she led a hearing on this issue, and presented the transcript of the hearing to US Department of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. In May 2005, Rep. Slaughter introduced an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2006 National Defense Authorization bill to ensure the Department of Defense provides better care to military victims of sexual assault.

She is the author of The Force Readiness Protection Act, H.R. 1709, introduced in May, which would provide a new set of measures to deal with the epidemic of rape and sexual assault in the military. Provisions of her legislation, specifically the ability for victims to be transferred off the base where the assault happened and the requirement for professionals trained in dealing with victims of these crimes to be assigned to each brigade, were included in the National Defense Authorization Act, passed into law on December 31, 2011.

More on Slaughter's work regarding the sexual assault in the military is available [here](#).

A full copy of Slaughter's letter to Secretary Panetta is [below](#).

January 20, 2012

The Honorable Leon Panetta

Secretary of Defense

The Pentagon

1400 Defense Pentagon

Washington, DC 20301-1400

Dear Secretary Panetta:

Thank you for your sincere statement this week regarding the tragedy of military sexual assault. I strongly agree with you that one sexual assault is one too many, and that we have a moral duty to do everything we can to protect the women and men who sacrifice so much to protect us every single day.

That is why I have been fighting for better protections against and stronger responses to sexual assault for our servicewomen and men since 1997. This past fall, I led a letter with 45 of my colleagues requesting the inclusion of House-passed provisions aimed at improving the military's response to sexual assault in the final version of the National Defense Authorization Act. I was so pleased that many of these provisions were indeed signed into law, including expedited base transfer and extended maintenance of records.

The additional steps which you announced yesterday by the Department of Defense are further evidence of your commitment to this issue. Training for and certification of sexual assault advocates is so important to ensure adequate and compassionate response to victims when sexual assaults do occur. Furthermore, your focus on training for investigators and judge advocates will be key in appropriately investigating and prosecuting these crimes. These are specific steps that I included in H.R. 1709, the Force Protection and Readiness Act, precisely

because they are integral to improving the response to sexual assault and preventing it from happening in the first place.

Again, thank you for your dedication to protecting our servicewomen and men. Your public commitment has made me very hopeful about the future of our armed forces. I look forward to working with you to continue improving the military's prevention of and response to sexual assault.

Sincerely,

Louise M. Slaughter

Member of Congress

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