

Major Legislative Priorities to Become Law

WASHINGTON – Congresswoman Louise Slaughter (NY-28), Co-Chair of the Congressional Pro-Choice Caucus and a leader in the fight against military sexual assault, today celebrated the inclusion of two major legislative initiatives in the final National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) to protect our women and men who serve in the military.

An amendment offered by Slaughter was included in the final agreement that requires the Department of Defense to educate servicemembers about the option to apply for the correction of military records when a member experiences any retaliatory personnel action (loss of rank or assignments, for example) for making a report of sexual assault or sexual harassment.

"The occurrence of sexual harassment and assault are blemishes on the proud and honorable tradition of our armed forces," said Slaughter. "My amendment goes a long way towards ensuring that those with the courage to step forward have the information necessary to protect themselves against unwarranted, retaliatory personnel action for making a report of sexual harassment or sexual assault. I believe our partners in the military are actively engaged in changing a culture that has led to far too many incidents of sexual assault, and this is another step in the right direction."

In addition, Slaughter celebrated the inclusion of a provision in the final NDAA which authorizes the use of military health insurance funds for abortion in cases of rape or incest. Unlike most other federal health programs, the Defense Department does not currently have an exemption for abortion coverage in the case of rape or incest - only when the mother's life is at risk. Slaughter has advocated for this change for years, and is the author of the MARCH Act, which includes the language found in the final NDAA, and would also provide servicewomen with the right to access full reproductive health care services from Department of Defense medical facilities. Earlier this month, Slaughter sent a letter together with Rep. Diana DeGette to Speaker John Boehner and the chairs of the House and Senate Armed Services Committees requesting inclusion of the provision in any final NDAA.

"Today is a great day for the thousands of brave women who serve our country," said Slaughter. "Unfortunately, an estimated 300 servicewomen each year become pregnant as a result of sexual assault, yet unlike any other federal employee their insurance did not provide full reproductive health care options. This change will finally grant servicewomen the same rights as every other American woman, and give them the choice they deserve."