

WASHINGTON – Congresswoman Louise Slaughter (NY-28), Chairwoman of the House Rules Committee, today successfully championed protections for military personnel as part of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

Said Congresswoman Slaughter, “I am pleased that military personnel will receive increased protections against the dangers of sexual assault.□ We must ensure that there is zero tolerance for sexual assault in the military. As our service members selflessly serve our country every day, we must ensure a professional and safe operating environment.”

Thanks to Congresswoman Slaughter’s efforts, the NDAA, which was approved by Congress today, includes important provisions to protect military personnel as they dutifully serve our country. The approved legislation includes the following provisions that were pushed for and supported by Congresswoman Slaughter:

- Improved training standards for sexual assault victim advocates, sexual assault coordinators, and members of the armed services

- Feasibility study in order to improve legal assistance and access to court martial documents for victims of sexual assault

- More complete sexual assault reporting through completion of a DOD-wide database on sexual assault

- Enhance and elevate the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO) and Director

- Improved comprehensive Sexual Assault prevention and response policy

- Improved protocols for providing medical care for victims of sexual assault

Sexual assault is a continuing problem in the US military. A recent report titled “Annual Report on Sexual Harassment and Violence at the Military Service Academies”, revealed the extent of the problem of sexual assault within US military academies. In part:

- The number of reported sexual assault cases rose from 25 in the 08-09 academic year to 41 in the 09-10 academic year – **an increase of 64% in sexual assault reports.**
- **12.9% of women and 1.9% of men indicated experiencing unwanted sexual contact during the prior year.**

As the US Department of Defense (DoD) notes, the number of incidences of sexual assault are probably much higher than the numbers indicate, concluding: “These survey results suggest that the 41 reports of sexual assault at the MSAs accounted for fewer than 10% of the incidents of unwanted sexual contact that may have actually occurred.

Congresswoman Slaughter has been working for years to draw attention to the problem of sexual assault of women 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 DoD provides better care to military victims of sexual assault.

Rep. Slaughter also introduced an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2007 National Defense Authorization bill (H.R. 5122) requiring DoD to include the results of disciplinary action, including Article 15s and court-martial convictions, as part of the annual report on sexual assault in the military.

In February 2009, Rep. Slaughter reintroduced military sexual assault legislation, H.R. 840, Military Domestic and Sexual Violence Response Act.

In May of 2010, Congresswoman Louise Slaughter (NY-28) introduced H.R. 5347, The Force Protection and Readiness Act, a set of new measures to deal with the epidemic of rape and sexual assault in the military. This legislation followed the DoD's release of the Defense Task Force on Sexual Assault in the military in 2009.

On April 26, 2010, Congresswoman Slaughter sent a letter to member of the House Armed Services Committee urging them to include protections in the NDAA against sexual assault in the military. After the legislation successfully passed the House, Congresswoman Slaughter issued a second letter on November 29, 2010 urging Senators Carl Levin and John McCain to also pass the proposed protections in the Senate version of the bill.