

As Longtime Champion for Victims, Slaughter Praises Inclusion of Provisions She Advocated

WASHINGTON – Congresswoman Louise Slaughter (NY-28), Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee, today praised several provisions she's been championing that protect victims of sexual assault in the military that were included in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) presented today to the House.

Specifically, Slaughter praised pieces of the bill that expedite base transfers for victims of sexual assault, require a Sexual Assault Response Coordinator and Sexual Assault Victim Advocate to be assigned to each brigade, provides for sexual assault training and education at each level of military education and guarantee victims a copy of the court marshal proceeding regarding their case, which allows them to seek Veterans' benefits in the future.

"I've been working to address the critical problem of sexual assault in the military since 1997 and I can tell you that while it has not always been an easy fight, it's been the right fight," said Slaughter. "Today, we can finally say that we are giving the aggrieved victims' of sexual assault some small measure of comfort by extending to them the rights they so greatly need and deserve."

As per the Uniform Code of Military Justice, members of the military are bound by a different legal code than the one used by civilians.

Slaughter is a leading voice speaking out against sexual assault in the military, having advocated for all of the changes she's applauding today.

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 today's legislation.

"Imagine being a victim of rape while serving in the military on a base overseas, and having to salute your rapist each and every day in order to do your job. That is what some members of our armed forces have experienced. That's not right," said Slaughter. "Finally, these women and men will have access to a trained professional within their brigade to assist them in dealing with the trauma they have experienced, and they will have the right to request a transfer off base, which must be decided within 72 hours of the request. Furthermore, there will now be education and awareness training given at every level within the military to prevent these atrocities from happening in the first place."

On December 5, Slaughter led a letter with 46 of her colleagues in a bipartisan effort to urge the Chairmen and Ranking Members of the House and Senate Armed Services Committees to include several provisions from the stronger House bill into the final legislation. The letter requested the need for increased education on the issue of sexual assault in the military and a requirement that victims receive a copy of the court marshal proceeding allowing them to seek Veterans' benefits. Both of those provisions were included in the final bill as well.

A copy of her letter is below.

The provisions were included in the controversial National Defense Authorization Act which Slaughter ultimately voted against due to concerns on over provisions that would provide the power to detain Americans with no cause indefinitely, her concern for civil liberties and misgivings from the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Testifying before the Senate Judiciary Committee this morning, FBI Director Robert Mueller III said that the latest version of the National Defense Authorization Act doesn't resolve concerns that mandating military detention for non-citizen terrorism suspects would harm national security.

Slaughters Letter to the Chairmen and Ranking Members of the House and Senate Armed Services Committees

December 5, 2011

The Honorable Carl Levin The Honorable John McCain

Chairman Ranking Member

Senate Armed Services Committee Senate Armed Services Committee

228 Russell Senate Office Building 228 Russell Senate Office Building

Washington, DC 20510 Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Buck McKeon The Honorable Adam Smith

Chairman Ranking Member

House Armed Services Committee House Armed Services Committee

2120 Rayburn House Office Building 2120 Rayburn House Office Building

Washington, DC 20515 Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Levin, Chairman McKeon, Ranking Member McCain, and Ranking Member Smith:

Thank you for your leadership in addressing the problem of sexual assault and rape in the military by including provisions in both the House- and the Senate-passed versions of the Fiscal Year 2012 National Defense Authorization Act that will provide greater protections for our service women and men stationed in the U.S. and abroad and help ensure zero tolerance for sexual assault in the ranks. We have a duty to protect our men and women in uniform from the tragedy that is sexual assault in the military.

As the FY 2012 National Defense Authorization Act proceeds to conference, we ask that you strongly consider finalizing the House-passed language from H.R. 1540 addressing sexual assault, specifically in the following sections of the bill:

H.R. 1540 Section 583, as opposed to S. 1253 Section 563, regarding the access of sexual assault victims to legal counsel. The House version of the bill makes it clear that a victim of sexual assault is entitled to legal assistance.

H.R. 1540 Section 584, as opposed to S. 1253 Section 564, regarding privileged communications between sexual assault victims and sexual assault response coordinators and victim advocates. The House version clearly states that the communications between a victim and a Victim Advocate are confidential.

H.R. 1540 Section 585, as opposed to S. 1253 Section 566, regarding the maintenance of records prepared in connection with sexual assaults. Specifically, we believe that the final NDAA must spell out that records of sexual assault should be retained for as long as technically possible and that victims must have access to these records. Further, it must require the Department of Defense (DOD) to prepare a verbatim record of all court proceedings in which a charge of sexual assault is adjudicated and provide a copy to the victim, regardless of the outcome. These records are essential so that victims can claim Veterans benefits.

H.R. 1540 Section 586, as opposed to S. 1253 Section 565, regarding expedited consideration

and priority for application for consideration of a permanent change of station or unit transfer. The House version is more sensitive to the needs of the victim by requiring commanders to approve the victim's request to transfer duty stations.

H.R. 1540 Section 587, regarding training and education programs for sexual assault prevention. While the DOD has made strides in training and education programs addressing sexual assault, we believe that DOD must have a comprehensive program where they consult with military and civilian experts that have experience with the prevention of and the response to sexual assault.

Including these provisions in the final FY 2012 National Defense Authorization Act will greatly improve the military's response to sexual assault. We must keep the pressure on DOD to protect our men and women in uniform, and we urge you to support this effort.

Sincerely,