

June 28 2005 - Slaughter Denounces Halt of Military Sexual Assault Trial

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Victim's Medical Treatment Records Should Remain Confidential

Prepares to File Legislation Protecting Military Sexual Assault Victims Privacy Rights

Washington, DC - Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY), Ranking Member of the House Committee on Rules,

made the following statement this morning;

"This past Friday, the military halted the sexual assault trial against First Lieutenant Harding because the defense could not obtain access to some of the victim's confidential medical treatment records. However, the victim's therapy sessions and ten year medical history are plainly irrelevant to the facts of the case.

Personal medical records are often used for character assassination of the victim. That is why Federal and State laws protect the privacy of civilian sexual assault victims.

For the military to drop this compelling case under such circumstances truly demonstrates their lack of commitment to ending the sexual assault epidemic in the military. We owe America's fighting women more respect and consideration than this.

I am currently drafting legislation which will ensure military sexual assault victims are afforded the same rights and protections under the law as civilian victims of sexual assault. There can be no double standard here."

Rep. Slaughter will be introducing legislation shortly to amend the Uniform Code of Military Justice to strengthen protections for confidential treatment and communications between victims of sexual assault in the military and their advocates.

This legislation would bring military law in line with federal and state laws that ensure protections for confidential communications and records. More importantly, this bill would allow service women who are victimized to seek the necessary treatment without fear that their most private conversations would be exposed in a military court.