

STATEMENT BY

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Visclosky, for having me here this morning. I would also like to thank all the members of the committee for allowing me the opportunity to testify on this important matter.

I was still a teenager when we pulled out of Vietnam. Yet, I remember vividly the impact it had on our country and how it changed our thoughts on war and diplomacy. The role of women in this country was changing as well.

The women's movement of the 1970s was in part a reaction to the type of happy homemaker that was often portrayed in television sitcoms in the 1950s. Young women coming of age in the 1950s were only exposed to housewives like those in *Leave It to Beaver*, *The Donna Reed Show* and *Father Knows Best*. A working woman as a role model did not come along until the late 1960s and early 1970s, with shows such as *Julia* with Diahann Carroll or *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*. A new social movement took center stage in the 1970s. It followed the lead of the civil rights movement, and allowed women to push not just for more educational opportunities but for equality in all aspects of their lives.

The military moved much slower than private industry to include women beyond the role of caregiver, nurse, or administrative assistant. Yet it has come a long way from only having women serve in supportive, secondary roles to their male counterparts.

Now more than 200,000 women are in the active-duty military, including almost 70 generals and admirals. That number comprises approximately 74,000 in the Army, 53,000 in the Navy, 62,000 in the Air Force and 14,000 in the Marine Corps. Women make up about 14.5 percent of the active-duty force of almost 1.4 million.

Among the top ranks, only 7.1 percent of the 976 generals and admirals are women. Broken down this number remains way too small with 28 female generals in the Air Force, 19 in the Army, 21 female admirals in the Navy, and only 1 in the Marine Corps. Among the enlisted ranks, 60 percent of women are still in either the medical or administrative specialties; another 30 percent are in the supply units or part of the communications staff. The numbers are not much different for female officers.

While the move to lift the ban and open combat units in the military to women seemed risky to some, I strongly believe like many others – that it is about time. As former Secretary of Defense, Leon Panetta stated, “If members of our military can meet the qualifications for a job, then they should have the right to serve, regardless of creed or color or gender or sexual orientation.”

To promote gender equality, we have to ensure that our militaries’ tests and training reflect the true nature of combat rather than preconceived and traditional notions of what it means to be a good soldier. Women make up over half the population in the United States and slightly less than half of the workforce. And while the private sector still struggles with the glass ceiling and pay equality is still not realized -- we are making great strides. The military must continue to make great strides as well.

I am pleased that the National Defense Authorization Act removed several barriers to women currently serving and those planning to serve; including:

- 1) More gender-neutral occupational standards that by January 2016 will allow almost all military positions and units to be open to women;
- 2) A requirement that combat equipment for women be properly designed and fitted and meet required standards for wear and survivability;
- 3) The armed forces need to have a strong pool of highly qualified individuals to meet their leadership needs. I am pleased that NDAA requires a review by the Comptroller General to review outreach and recruitment efforts toward women officers. This review should help identify and evaluate current recruiting methods and put forward new ones, including new ways to increase the number of young women into and graduating from the military academies; and
- 4) Finally the attempt to stem the Congress here continues its practice of legislating in various ways in an attempt to stem the tide of military sexual assaults. Thankfully the “good soldier defense”—which considered those of general military character toward the probability of innocence in sexual assault prosecutions was eliminated. Victims can now be consulted regarding their preference for prosecuting offenders by court-martial or through civilian channels.

While these and the other provisions may be beneficial, they do not go far enough. I agree with the National Women’s Law Center that the most effective way to combat sexual assaults would be to create an independent, unbiased system of military justice, as provided in the proposed Military Justice Improvement Act. Issues of retaliation must be addressed. I hope these important aspects of the NDAA are fully funded and monitored by this subcommittee and by the full committee as well.

While issues such as changes in combat equipment and design take time, I respectfully request that a report on timing and cost is submitted to the committee. We would expect the services to move with all deliberate speed if our soldier’s equipment did not allow them to effectively engage the enemy. This should be true for all service-members not just the men.

Mr. Chairman, we are in a time of fighting on multiple fronts using weapons we could not have even imagined during the Vietnam-era. Most of these weapons require more brains and less brawn. They require knowledge of cyber warfare, the ability to use missiles and drones to fight from a distance. These and other modern weapons have equalized the potential for women in combat, since wars are less likely to be fought on a hand-to-hand basis. Many of the new military occupations are or can become gender-neutral. They focus on the service-members intellect not their physical stature.

The fast pace advance of technology is producing changes in the threats we face. How can we keep up? The answer is to be just as innovative with our human resources strategy as we are with our weapons and tactics. We need new ways to recruit the best talent to defend our nation. One of those ways is to better utilize the other half of the population – women.

One young woman so poignantly asked “How can we effect change in the world when only half of it is invited or feel welcome to participate in the conversation?” Women must be a part of the security conversations and this committee has the power to include them by funding provisions that support greater involvement.

Members of this committee know the world is changing, warfare is changing, and our military must change with it or suffer the consequence. Cybersecurity is a gender-neutral occupation. Allowing both men and women to serve our country and protect our nation as equals. I hope we will continue to see this growing area of concern addressed through effective human resourcing and adequate funding for advanced technology.

Just as we fund equality programs for girls in Afghanistan, we must push for that same idea here. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Pete Visclosky and members of this subcommittee; I am aware of how difficult your job is in these tight fiscal times. You serve to fund a part of our nation that is critical to our very well-being as Americans. This is an awesome power and as such it comes with a heavy responsibility.

As you consider what to provide full funding for or what to decrease, I respectfully ask that you maintain full funding for provisions that address changes to combat equipment, support for sexual assault victims, female outreach and recruitment programs, and gender-occupational policy reviews. I do not say this just because I am a women and a member of congress. I say this because I am also a mother and a grandmother, that taught both her son and her daughter that they could grow up in this great country and be anything they set their mind to. We should not fund programs that push for equality abroad if we are not willing to push for full equality here at home.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.