

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 9, 2012

The Honorable Carl Levin  
Chairman  
Senate Armed Services Committee  
228 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John McCain  
Ranking Member  
Senate Armed Services Committee  
228 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Levin and Ranking Member McCain,

Last year, members of Congress sent a letter to the Department of Defense (DOD) inquiring about the expanding role of women in the Armed Services and how we can ensure that as we draw down from our current engagements, the service of women will be acknowledged and appropriately reflected.

DOD's March 2012 *Report to Congress on the Review of Laws, Policies and Regulations Restricting the Service of Female Members in the U.S. Armed Forces* found that while the DOD policy that prohibits women from being "assigned" to units below the brigade level whose primary mission is to engage in combat was originally instated to limit women's exposure to hostile fire, the non-linear dynamics of the modern-day battlefield make it so that combat support operations can no longer be performed within a low-risk environment. Subsequently, the DOD approved "an exception to the 1994 policy that would allow the United States Army, United States Marine Corps, and the United States Navy to open positions at the battalion level of direct ground combat units, in select occupational specialties currently open to women."

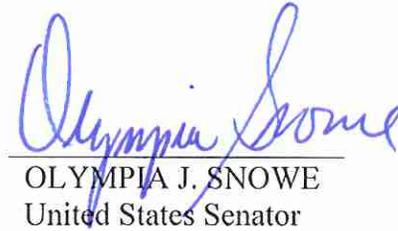
We are pleased that the DOD is updating its policies to reflect the realities on the ground, but feel there is critical information missing. When it comes to positions above the battalion level, DOD is able to circumvent the combat exclusion policy by "attaching" women to units whose primary mission is to engage personnel of a hostile force. Recognizing this reality, we must address the question of how to accurately and fairly reflect the performance of women who are exposed to hostile fire while "attached" to combat arms units.

In an attempt to attain this information, fully comprehend the critical role women are playing in today's armed forces and ensure that women receive the much-deserved credit they earn during their military careers, we respectfully request that the FY 2013 National Defense Authorization Act require a **one-time report** on (1) the capacity in which the 255,000 women who have deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan have served, specifically those that have been "attached" to combat arms units during their deployments and (2) how female service members are being recognized for having served in combat arms functions while "attached" to combat arms units when it comes to documenting these experiences in their military records and DD214s.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request. Women have and continue to make invaluable sacrifices for our country, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that they are afforded the same recognition, benefits and opportunities as their male peers.

Sincerely,

  
ROBERT MENENDEZ  
United States Senator

  
OLYMPIA J. SNOWE  
United States Senator