

SCR 5 / SR 6

URGING THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
AND THE HAWAII OFFICE OF VETERANS SERVICES TO DEVELOP
COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS
OF WOMEN VETERANS.

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

TESTIMONY ON SCR5/SR6 URGING THE UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND THE HAWAII OFFICE
OF VETERANS SERVICES TO DEVELOP COMPREHENSIVE
PROGRAMS AND SERVICES TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF WOMEN
VETERANS

SENATE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY, GOVERNMENT
OPERATIONS AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

BY

MR. RONALD P. HAN, JR.
DIRECTOR OF OFFICE OF VETERANS SERVICES

March 15, 2012

Chair Espero, Vice Chair Kidani and Committee members:

I am Ron Han, Director of the Office of Veterans Services (OVS). I appreciate this opportunity to provide testimony in support of the concepts on Senate Concurrent Resolution 5/Senate Resolution 6.

In response to the Resolutions, the OVS is in the preparation stages of organizing a women's veterans task force committee to address the needs of our women veterans. In the near future, plans are being crafted in partnership with Veterans Affairs (VA), State, County and private agencies in having women's veterans issues shared on the national stage during the annual Women's Veterans Summit comprised of representatives from all 50 States and territories. Our neighbor islands are also looking at specific programs, like Homeless Female Veterans, and providing outreach to them with support from various Federal, State, private and non-profit agencies.

The OVS and VA recognizes the strong need to develop programs and to address pertinent issues affecting this fastest growing group of veterans.

We fully support these initiatives.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of Hawaii's veteran community.

HAWAII
STATE
COMMISSION
ON THE
STATUS
OF
WOMEN



Chair
LESLIE WILKINS

COMMISSIONERS:

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CARMILLE LIM
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March 14, 2012

Testimony in Support of SCR 5

To: Senator Will Espero, Chair
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Committee on Public Safety, Government Operations and
Military Affairs

From: Catherine Betts, Esq., Executive Director, Hawaii State Commission on the
Status of Women

Re: Testimony in Support of SCR 5

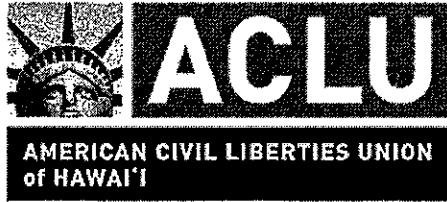
On behalf of the Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women, I would like to express my support of this resolution, which urges the United States Department of Veteran Services and the Hawaii Office of Veteran Services to develop comprehensive programs and services for our female veterans.

Female veterans often face very different challenges than male veterans. Many female veterans suffer from severe Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) not only from their experiences in wartime, but also from their experiences as victims and survivors of sexual assault, sexual harassment and other gender based violence. In order to address these very specific harms, those who serve our veterans must be equipped with gender sensitive programming and services for female veterans who return home. This resolution calls for a progress report from the Office of Veteran Services on the development of programs and services for female veterans. This is a step in the right direction.

The Commission strongly supports this resolution and respectfully urges this Committee to pass it.

Thank you for this opportunity,

Catherine Betts, Esq.



Committee: Committee on Public Safety, Government Operations, and Military Affairs
Hearing Date/Time: Thursday, March 15, 2012, 2:50 p.m.
Place: Room 224
Re: Testimony of the ACLU of Hawaii in Support of S.C.R. 5/S.R. 6

Dear Chair Espero and Members of the Committee on Public Safety, Government Operations, and Military Affairs:

The American Civil Liberties Union of Hawaii ("ACLU of Hawaii") writes in support of S.C.R. 5/ S.R. 6.

Thousands of service members each year are estimated to have experienced some form of military sexual trauma (MST), including rape, sexual assault, and sexual harassment. These acts occur nearly twice as often within military ranks as they do within civilian society. Rape, sexual assault, and sexual harassment are so prevalent in the military that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has coined a term to refer to these acts when perpetrated against servicemembers: "military sexual trauma" (MST).¹

In 2008, the VA found that more than 48,000 female veterans suffer from MST.² Yet, while one in three women are sexually assaulted during their service, the military has failed systematically to investigate complaints, appropriately punish perpetrators, and treat trauma and other health conditions suffered by survivors.³

Victims who report MST commonly face stigma and retribution. Superiors in the chain of command are charged with investigating reports and have little incentive to document assaults which could reflect poorly on leadership evaluations. In the end, only 8 percent of alleged perpetrators are prosecuted.⁴ After they leave the service, veterans face enormous obstacles in obtaining medical care and disability compensation connected to sexual assault. Please adopt S.C.R. 5/ S.R. 6 in defense of the women who defend us.

The mission of the ACLU of Hawaii is to protect the fundamental freedoms enshrined in the U.S. and State Constitutions. The ACLU of Hawaii fulfills this through legislative, litigation, and

¹ See <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/pages/military-sexual-trauma-general.asp>.

² See <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=126783956>.

³ See <http://www.aclu.org/files/assets/2010-12-13-MSTFOIAComplaint.pdf>.

⁴ *Id.*

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Chair Espero, Committee on Public Safety, Government Operations, and Military Affairs
and Members Thereof

March 15, 2012

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public education programs statewide. The ACLU of Hawaii is a non-partisan and private non-profit organization that provides its services at no cost to the public and does not accept government funds. The ACLU of Hawaii has been serving Hawaii for over 45 years.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Laurie Temple
Staff Attorney

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ATTN: COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY, GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

Senator Will Espero, Chair
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair
And Committee Members

HEARING DATE: March 15, 2012
HEARING TIME: 2:50 p.m.

IN SUPPORT OF SCR5 and SR6– Urging the United States Department of Veterans Affairs and the Hawai'i Office of Veterans Services to develop comprehensive programs and services to address the needs of women veterans.

Dear Chair Espero, Vice Chair Kidani and committee members,

The Gay Lesbian Bisexual and Transgender Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawaii is in strong support of this measure that would urge the VA to look at providing gender-appropriate services for women veterans.

Retired women veterans came forward to speak to the Women's Caucus. The report systematic abuse, particularly while in combat zones. The military is too pre-occupied with engaging in battle to address the situation properly. Therefore, women are required to "stay put" in an abusive environment. They are totally stressed by facing both the enemy without and the enemy within.

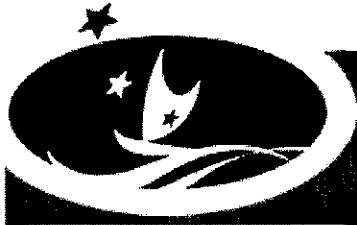
They reported that they were forced to have sex with their supervisors. One of them also reported being present when another woman was raped.

According to a 2008 report to Congress, one in three military women will be raped in the course of their career. Violence against fellow soldiers in the battlefield is commonplace, and it is not uncommon at home.

(See a summary of murders and suspicious deaths: <http://www.commondreams.org/view/2008/04/28>.)

Women suffering from sexual trauma perpetrated by fellow military members have special needs and those needs are not sufficiently addressed by the military leadership. A 2008 RAND study found that female veterans are suffering double the rates of depression and PTSD than their male counterparts, and 71 percent of those report that service member(s) sexually assaulted them. AT 71%, this make sexual assault the norm. It is unconscionable to ask women to make the "ultimate sacrifice" when then enlist in the military and then not adequately protect them from their "fellows".

Mahalo,
Jo-Ann M. Adams, Chair



DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF HAWAII

March 15, 2012

To: Senator Will Espero, Chair
Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair and
Members of the Committee on Public Safety, Government Operations, and Military
Affairs

From: Jeanne Y. Ohta, Co-Chair
Hawai'i State Democratic Women's Caucus

RE: SCR 5/SR 6
URGING THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND
THE HAWAII OFFICE OF VETERANS SERVICES TO DEVELOP
COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF
WOMEN VETERANS

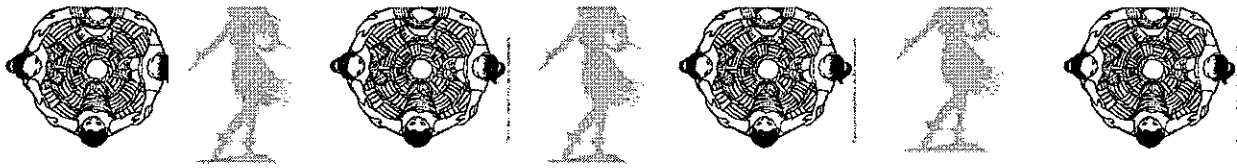
Hearing: March 15, 2012, 2:50 p.m., Room 224

Position: Support

The Hawai'i State Democratic Women's Caucus writes in support of these measures. The number of women veterans is increasing; many women have served in war zones and under fire.

Traditionally veterans' benefits and other programs are based on the needs of men. Women not only deserve, but need gender appropriate and gender specific programs and services. The needs of men and women are different not just because of physical differences but also because of the roles women take on as mothers and caregivers in their families.

We urge the committee to pass these measures. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.



Hawai'i Women's Coalition

ATTN: COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY, GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

Senator Will Espero, Chair
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair
And Committee Members

HEARING DATE: March 15, 2012
HEARING TIME: 2:50 p.m.

IN STRONG SUPPORT OF SR6 and SCR5 – Urging the United States Department of Veterans Affairs and the Hawai'i Office of Veterans Services to develop comprehensive programs and services to address the needs of women veterans.

Dear Chair Espero, Vice Chair Kidani and committee members,

The Coalition is in strong support of this measure that would urge the VA to take a hard look at providing gender appropriate services to women veterans. I urge you both as a veteran and as the Co-Chair of the Coalition to adopt this resolution.

Allow me to repeat a story. As reported in the New York Times, "On the morning of Monday, Jan. 9, 2006, a 21-year-old Army specialist named Suzanne Swift went AWOL. Her unit, the 54th Military Police Company, out of Fort Lewis, Wash., was two days away from leaving for Iraq." Why did she go AWOL? The answer is simple – she was suffering PTSD from sexual trauma inflicted upon her by two superiors in her chain of command. The Army was about to send her back with the perpetrators into the same situation.

She had been forced to have sex under threats by her supervisors. She had become a victim of what has become known as "command rape." Though she reported the perpetrators and asked for help, none was forthcoming from the NCO's and/or officers in her chain of command, including the chaplain. What happened to the confirmed perpetrators? Nothing.

Was this an isolated instance? I think not. According to a 2008 report to congress, one in three military women will be raped in the course of their career. Violence against fellow soldiers is rife on the battlefield and not uncommon at home. (See this summary of murders and suspicious deaths: <http://www.commondreams.org/view/2008/04/28>.)

Women suffering from sexual trauma perpetrated by fellow military members have special needs and those needs have not been sufficiently addressed by the leadership of the military. A 2008 RAND study found that female veterans are suffering double the rates of depression and post-traumatic stress disorder for their male counterparts, and 71 percent of those report that service member(s) sexually assaulted them.

I am proud of my time in service and respect the Army that gave me so many opportunities. That is why I am saddened and appalled that the disgraceful abuse of women service members goes largely unaddressed to this day. What has occurred as a result of wars that last too long has created a military that I no longer recognize. Please help restore our service women to health and dignity. They deserve our best.

Mahalo,

Ann S. Freed
Co-Chair Women's Coalition
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