



June 11, 2015

Vote YES for Amendment 1550 to the FY16 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA)

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union, a non-partisan organization dedicated to protecting the principles of freedom and equality set forth in the Constitution and in our nation's civil rights laws, we urge you to vote in favor of Amendment 1550 to the FY16 NDAA. This amendment would allow servicewomen and military family members to access abortion care on military treatment facilities (MTF) and to pay for the care with their own funds.

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We believe that all women, including servicewomen and military wives and daughters, should have health insurance coverage for abortion, but federal law allows coverage only in cases of rape, incest and where the woman's life is endangered. Similarly, MTFs are barred from providing abortion care except in those limited circumstances, which means that a woman not so affected cannot obtain an abortion even if a medical provider wanted to offer it, and she pays for the care with her own funds. This restriction harms women, in the United States and overseas, who rely on MTFs for their medical care.

Servicewomen face unique barriers to accessing health care services that are unavailable on base. For example, a servicewoman's ability to travel off base is at the discretion of her commander, who can deny her the permission needed to leave the base and obtain an abortion. Domestically, servicewomen face great difficulties in accessing abortion care as a result of service branch policies that limit travel and particularly in states with onerous restrictions on abortion access. For servicewomen and military family members stationed overseas, host nations may not offer or allow abortion care. If the servicewoman or family member is prohibited from accessing abortion care on a military base she may have to resort to local facilities that are substandard or unsafe, return to the United States, or travel to another country. The costs, time, and obvious difficulties involved prevent some women from obtaining the care they need.

The ban on private funding for abortion at MTFs has real and cruel impacts on women's lives. The women who serve our country, and the family members who serve and sacrifice equally, deserve better. We hope you will demonstrate your support for these women by supporting Senate Amendment 1550.

Please contact Vania Leveille at vleveille@aclu.org if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

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