

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

January 10, 2005

The Honorable Donald H. Rumsfeld
Office of the Secretary of Defense
1000 The Pentagon
Washington D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Rumsfeld:

In this time of conflict, when brave young men and women are willingly putting their lives at risk, it is essential that they do not fear the actions of their comrades-in-arms. The act of sexual assault is condemned in civilian society and is unforgivable when one soldier sexually assaults another. The bonds of trust and respect unite soldiers on the battlefield. It is imperative that this trust is not eroded due to insufficient policies addressing sexual assault among our troops.

As the leaders of the bipartisan Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues, we wish to commend the effort put forth by the Department of Defense (DoD) in complying with Section 577 of Public Law 108-375, the Ronald W. Reagan National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005. As you are aware, this act required the DoD to develop a definition of sexual assault that is uniform for all the Armed Forces. This has been no small task, yet the Joint Task Force on Sexual Assault Prevention and Response, led by Brigadier General K.C. McClain, has carried out this charge with the utmost professionalism and timeliness. It is clear that you and your staff place a high priority on the prevention of, and response to, sexual assault within the military. Your commitment is greatly appreciated.

The Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues looks forward to continuing to work with you and your staff as the Department implements and refines the policies developed by the Joint Task Force. As you know, the Caucus takes this issue very seriously, and we maintain our dedication to ensuring that sexual assault in the military is appropriately addressed. We thank you for your Department's conscientious efforts to work collaboratively with the Women's Caucus in order to effect immediate and concrete progress to assist victims of sexual assault and to prevent future violations from occurring.

Sincerely,



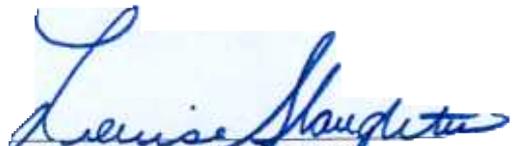
Ginny Brown-Waite, Vice-Chair
Congressional Caucus
for Women's Issues



Hilda L. Solis, Vice-Chair
Congressional Caucus
for Women's Issues



Shelley Moore-Capito, Co-Chair
Congressional Caucus
for Women's Issues



Louise Slaughter, Co-Chair
Congressional Caucus
for Women's Issues