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More than half of all women in the military have experienced sexual harassment, and one in four have reported sexual assault. The impact of these abuses is significant: twice as many female military personnel experience PTSD than do their male counterparts. Many women who lodge complaints are given “bad paper” summary discharges, depriving them of Veterans Affairs health care and education benefits, and often leading to the stigma of failure.

On January 1, 2022, the National Defense Authorization Act went into effect, removing military commanders from decisions related to the prosecution of sexual assault and other serious crimes. This has been a nine-year battle, driven forward by Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY).

Congressional legislation is only the first step in changing U.S. military culture.

Under the cover of the American flag, this soldier, like all military personnel, declares allegiance to her country and offers her body as a shield for the Constitution and all Americans. She has a right to expect protection from sexual harassment and assault while performing her job and serving her nation.