



# Ensuring Equitable Benefits and Services for Women and Minority Veterans

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## Critical Policy Issues

- **VA must ensure enrolled veterans have equitable access to health care/services and work to improve health outcomes**
  - Prioritize data collection and analysis to identify trends
  - Review methods of service delivery to underrepresented/underserved populations
  - Investigate cultural differences that create barriers to VA
  - Change VA culture to create a safe, welcoming and harassment-free environment

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## Women and Minority Veterans Focus in 117<sup>th</sup> Congress

### Hearings

- March 18, 2021 – [Beyond Deborah Sampson: Improving Healthcare for America’s Women Veterans in the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress](#)
- April 15, 2021 – [House Veterans’ Affairs Committee Legislative Hearing](#)  
*H.R. 344, H.R. 958, H.R. 2521, H.R. 2093*
- May 12, 2021 – [Supporting Disabled Veterans: The State of Claims Processing During and After COVID-19](#)
- June 23, 2021 – [Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee Legislative Hearing](#)  
*S. 796, S. 1198, S. 1863, S. 2102, Building Solutions for Veterans Experiencing Homelessness Act*



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## Women and Minority Veterans Focus in 117<sup>th</sup> Congress

### Additional Activities

- April 22, 2021 – House Veterans’ Affairs Committee Closed Door Roundtable on eliminating sexual harassment at the Department of Veterans Affairs
- March 17, 2021 – VA Secretary McDonough hosted round table on gaps in women veterans programs, services
- Continuing work with the Congressional Women Veterans Task Force
- VA is in the process of building a working group to aid its efforts to end sexual assault/harassment; continues to promote White Ribbon Campaign

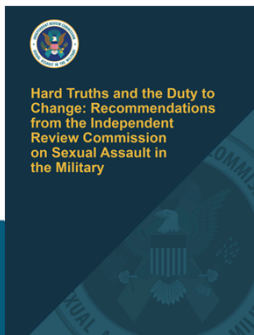
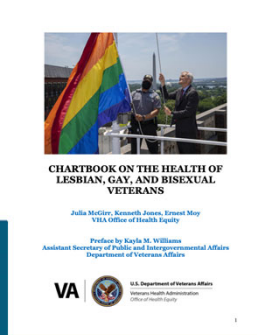


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## Women and Minority Veterans Focus in 117<sup>th</sup> Congress

### Additional Activities

- Based on recommendations of its Independent Review Commission, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin supports changes to handling of sexual assault/harassment by removing these cases from chain of command; will work with Congress to implement changes
- VA underwent policy review to ensure non-discrimination based on sexual orientation/gender identity earlier this year and continues to work to include this information in the electronic health record
- VA released a chartbook on LGB veterans in June
- Discussions/legislation are including a more specific focus on data for specific populations



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## Women/Minority Veterans Legislation – 117<sup>th</sup>



### **Protecting MOMS Who Serve Act**

*Adds resources for maternity care coordination;  
mandates a report on maternal mortality and severe morbidity*

**H.R. 958**

**S. 796**



### **Delivering Optimal Urgent Labor Access (DOULA) for Veterans Affairs Act**

*Establishes pilot program for doula services to foster better  
child and maternal health outcomes*

**H.R. 2521**

**S. 1937**

### **Veteran Families Health Services Act**

*Broadens access to fertility services; requires research on reproductive  
health needs of veterans with SC disabilities (spinal cord, MST, mental  
health, genitourinary); study on toxic exposures and reproductive health*

**H.R. 2734**

**S.1280**

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## Women/Minority Veterans Legislation – 117<sup>th</sup>



### **Women Veterans TRUST Act**

*Requires VA to conduct a study on need for women-specific programs to treat/rehabilitate drug and alcohol dependency*

**H.R. 344**

### **Equal Access to Contraception Act**

*Prohibits VA from requiring copayments for contraceptive items covered by health insurance plans without cost-sharing required*

**H.R. 239**



### **SERVICE Act**

*Expands eligibility for VA mammography screenings for women veterans who served in specific locations/timeframes where burn pits were known to be used overseas*

**S. 2102**

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## Women/Minority Veterans Legislation – 117<sup>th</sup>



### **VA Peer Support Enhancement for MST Survivors Act**

*Requires VA to provide MST claimants an assigned peer support specialist throughout the claims (at the claimant's discretion)*

**H.R. 2724**

### **Justice for Women Veterans Act**

*Requires GAO study on women involuntarily separated from the Armed Forces due to pregnancy/parenthood*

**H.R. 2385**

### **MAMMO Act**

*Requires VA to develop strategic plan for breast imaging services; telemammography pilot; upgrade to 3D imaging; study BRCA testing; study mammography access to paralyzed/disabled veterans*

**H.R. 4571**

**TBD**



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## Women/Minority Veterans Legislation – 117<sup>th</sup>



### **Veterans and Families Information Act**

*Requires development of VA fact sheets in English in addition to the 10 most common spoken languages in the U.S.*

**H.R. 2093**



### **American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans Mental Health Act**

*Requires VA to have a full-time minority veterans coordinator, trained on culturally appropriate mental health/suicide prevention services*

**H.R. 912**

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## Women Veterans Seminar

### Time and location

- Monday Aug. 2, from 2-4 pm
- HB Plant Ballroom E-F, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor

### Guest speakers

- Congresswoman Julia Brownley, Chairwoman of the Congressional Women Veterans Task Force
- Lelia Jackson, Director, Assault and Harassment Prevention Office (VHA)
- Cheryl Rawls, Executive Director, Outreach, Transition & Economic Development (VBA)
- Mr. Stephen Ellis, Senior Customer Experience Strategist (VBA)


Thank You!

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