

November 2011

**U.S. ARMED FORCES FLAG OFFICERS IN SUPPORT OF
THE SHAHEEN AMENDMENT
TO THE FY12 NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT**

Dear Senators:

We, the undersigned flag officers, **write in strong support of the Shaheen Amendment to the FY12 National Defense Authorization Act (S. 1867) that provides abortion coverage for servicewomen and dependents who are victims of rape and incest.**

It has been our privilege to treat, care for, or serve alongside the brave men and women of our armed forces and we believe that they deserve the best medical care that our country can provide. We also believe that our women in the military, who serve their country and in many cases risk their lives and safety to preserve our freedoms, should have access to the full range of medical care, including comprehensive reproductive health care.

We are greatly disappointed to learn that, by federal statute, the Department of Defense is barred from providing coverage for abortion care except where a pregnant woman's life is endangered. Unlike the other federal bans on abortion coverage, the military ban *provides no exception for cases of rape and incest*. The current policy is unjust and unfair.

Restoring abortion coverage to our military women and family members who are survivors of rape and incest would bring the Department of Defense in line with the policy that governs other federal programs, such as Medicaid or the Federal Employee Health Benefit program. At the very least, our military women deserve the same access to care as civilian women who rely on the federal government for their health care.

Our servicewomen commit their lives to defending our freedoms; Congress should respect their service and sacrifice and provide them with the same level of health care coverage it provides civilians.

Additionally, claims that military physicians would be forced to provide abortions even if they have a religious or moral objection are absolutely false and, in this circumstance, are misdirected. The Shaheen Amendment is about insurance coverage. Moreover, military policy has long provided conscience protections for those military health care professionals who object to abortion – these protections were in effect during the brief period when the private funding ban was lifted in 1993-1995 and remain in effect today.

Sincerely,

1. Ronald R. Blanck, DO, Lieutenant General, MC, USA (Ret.), Fenwick Island, DE 19944
2. Robert G. Gard, Jr., Lieutenant General, USA (Ret.), Rockville, MD 20850
3. Claudia J. Kennedy, Lieutenant General, USA (Ret.), Hilton Head Island, SC 29928
4. Harold M. Koenig, MD, Vice Admiral, USN (Ret.), San Diego, CA 92116
5. Donna F. Barbisch, DHA, MPH, Major General, USA (Ret.), Washington, DC 20003
6. Dennis J. Laich, Major General, USA (Ret.), Powell, OH 43065

7. Gale S. Pollock, CRNA, FACHE, FAAN, Major General, USA (Ret.), Falls Church, VA 22041
8. Rabbi Harold L. Robinson, Rear Admiral, CHC, USN (Ret.), Centerville, MA 02632
9. Deborah C. Wheeling, MS, MSN, RN, Major General, Army National Guard (Ret.), Otego, NY 13825
10. Clara Adams-Ender, RN, MS, FAAN, Brigadier General, USA (Ret.), Lake Ridge, VA 22192
11. Evelyn "Pat" Foote, Brigadier General, USA (Ret.), Accokeek, MD 20607
12. Wilma L. Vaught, Brigadier General, USAF (Ret.), Falls Church, VA 22044