



Duckworth Presses Military for Answers on Efforts to Prevent and Prosecute Sexual Assault

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— U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) today participated in a U.S. Senate Armed Service Committee (SASC) Personnel Subcommittee roundtable discussion about the Department of Defense's (DoD) recently-released Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military. During the conversation, Duckworth focused on the U.S. Air Force's efforts to address the collateral misconduct policy, where survivors are disciplined for other actions unrelated to an assault, and DoD's decision to not report data on rates of assault against LGBTQ servicemembers despite prior years' reports showing higher-than-average assault rate.

“The recent report and today’s discussion have made it extremely clear; sexual assault remains a crisis in our nation’s military, and far too many of our men and women in uniform do not trust they’ll get the justice they deserve if they pursue it through the current system,” Duckworth said. **“The military’s failure to address this problem is letting down victims and harming our military’s readiness, recruitment and retention efforts. I am committed to pushing for meaningful reforms that prevent sexual assault from happening in the first place while ensuring survivors have what they need to heal and be able to resume the careers they dreamt about from the time they entered the military.”**

The DoD report estimates that about 20,500 servicemembers said they were assaulted in the 2018 fiscal year, compared to 14,900 in 2016 – a 38% increase. The military received 7,623 reports of sexual assault in 2018, which means that only roughly one in three survivors reported their assaults. Duckworth has been [outspoken](#) about the need for the military to address this problem to ensure all survivors feel comfortable reporting any assaults they experience.

Duckworth has been a strong advocate for survivors of military sexual assault and supports moving sexual assault crimes out of the military chain of command. At a SASC Hearing in February, Duckworth [called on military leaders](#) to reduce barriers that can prevent survivors of sexual assault from reporting it when they occur. Duckworth also [listened to testimony from survivors of military sexual assault](#) in March and asked for their suggestions on how to improve the military's response to this serious issue and promote accountability.

Last month, Duckworth [helped introduce](#) the bipartisan *Servicemember and Veterans' Empowerment and Support Act* to improve the resources and care for survivors of military sexual trauma (MST). The bill expands the definition of MST to ensure servicemembers and Veterans who experience online sexual harassment can access VA counseling and benefits and codifies a lower burden of proof so more survivors are eligible for trauma and mental health care related to MST, even if they didn't feel comfortable reporting the event to their chain of command while in service.