



March | April 2012

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Jim Willis, Director

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH: SALUTING WOMEN IN UNIFORM



Law School Confronts U.S. Ban on Women in Combat, Draft

More than 200,000 women have served in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and more than 130 have died in Iraq alone. Yet frontline combat duty, with its risks and rewards, is not officially an option for American women serving in the military.

A group at the University of Virginia School of Law wants to change that, and is seeking out litigants to win women the official right to serve in combat roles—and to qualify for the draft as well.

“Our goals are to gain official recognition for those women who have been placed in harm’s way

in the course of line of duty, and to expose a gender classification that is based on archaic stereotypes and is unconstitutional,” said second-year law student Kyle Mallinak. “We don’t just have to speculate about how women would perform in combat conditions. We know now that they’ve performed, and performed well.”

The group believes it will not be difficult to find plaintiffs for a lawsuit, but they would also be satisfied if the Department of Defense institutes a policy change first. Mallinak has joined efforts with law professor Anne Coughlin and second-year law

SEE COMBAT LAW ON PAGE 4

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STATE VETERANS AFFAIRS GROUP SIGNS MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH FEDERAL VA

Director's Message

Jim Willis,
Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs

In this edition, let me start by reminding my fellow veterans that the 2011 session of the State Legislature passed Senate Bill 74, which established March 30th of every year as Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day, to honor veterans of the Vietnam War. To all of my brothers and sisters who served in that war, I extend my appreciation for your service and a hearty Welcome Home!

As you will see in this edition, March is Women's History Month. As part of that celebration, we salute female veterans of all

of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA) signed an historic Memorandum of Understanding with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) designed to recognize and enhance the partnership between our association and the VA.

The hallmarks of this relationship will be effective communication, exchange of ideas and information, identification of emerging needs, and the continual re-evaluation of existing programs. I look forward to the success of this important agreement.

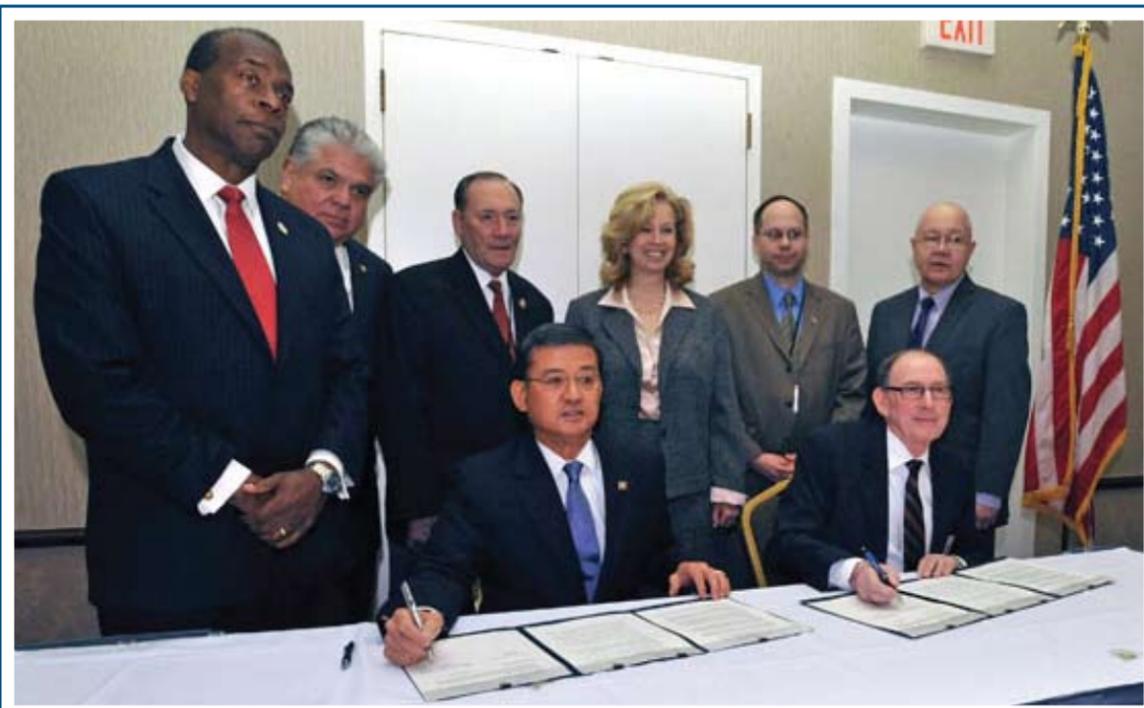


PHOTO SUBMITTED BY VA

VA Secretary Eric K. Shinseki (seated on left) signed a formal agreement with the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA) to enhance their relationship. ODVA Director and NASDVA Senior Vice President, Jim Willis (behind Shinseki), joined other NASDVA officers during the signing on Feb. 13.

branches and all eras. The service of our women in uniform continues to be a source of pride and professionalism for those who have served and who benefit as a result of their continued service to our state and nation.

As I write this message, the annual session of the State Legislature is a little over half-way completed, and we still don't know which of our veterans bills will make it to the Governor's desk. In our next edition, we will wrap up the session and give you an overview of the bills that passed, and a preview of some that we will introduce in the 2013 session.

In a recently completed conference in Alexandria, Virginia, the National Association

As always, I want to thank everyone who has donated their time, funds or materials to the Oregon Veterans Home. I am happy to report that people are already making donations to the new Veterans Home to be located in Lebanon. We simply could not operate these homes without your help, and I want everyone to know how much we appreciate your help and concern.

Jim Willis, Director

VETERANS DISABILITY RATING REVIEW

Veterans who were medically separated from the U.S. Military between Sept. 11, 2001 and Dec. 31, 2009 now have the opportunity to have their disability ratings reviewed by the Physical Disability Board of Review (PDBR).

The review was legislated by Congress as required by the Dignified Treatment of Wounded Warriors Act of 2008 and implemented by the Department of Defense to ensure the accuracy and fairness of combined disability ratings of 20 percent or less. The PDBR uses medical information provided by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the military department.

The military estimates that there are approximately 75,000 eligible veterans, however, as of May 2011, just 2,500 have applied to have their ratings reviewed. More than half of the ratings reviewed by the PDBR have been upgraded, allowing for a medical retirement. By law, the PDBR may not recommend a lower disability rating.

The Department of Defense designated the Air Force to lead the PDBR and evaluate cases from all military services and reserve components. The board will examine each applicant's medical separation, compare the military and VA ratings and make recommendations to the respective Service Secretary.

To learn more about the PDBR go to: www.health.mil/About_MHS/Organizations/MHS_Offices_and_Programs/PDBR.aspx. If you have more questions about PDBR, email: PDBRPA@afncr.af.mil



A soldier receives his physical exam.



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By mail: Send your current name and address to ODVA, Public Information, 700 Summer St., NE, Salem, OR 97301-1285.

By email: vetsnews@odva.state.or.us

Online: www.oregon.gov/odva/INFO/VetsNews.shtml

Published every other month for Oregon veterans and others interested in news affecting veterans and their families.

When credit is given to the source, VETS NEWS articles may be reprinted. Reunions printed upon space availability. **Input for the next issue must be received by April 5.**

THE END OF A WAR IS JUST THE BEGINNING

SALEM – With the war ending in Iraq, most Americans think that closes the book on Operation Iraqi Freedom. What many fail to realize is the end of a war is just the beginning of the transition for thousands of Oregon soldiers, airmen, sailors and Marines who come home in need of jobs, education, health care and VA disability benefits.

Countless deployments and welcome home celebrations have taken place over the last nine years since Operation Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom began. Since March 2003, more than 2 million U.S. service members have served in Iraq and Afghanistan. Among those, more than 385,000 National Guard and Reserve members have served in both operations. Oregon contributed nearly 30,000 of those deployed.

More than 13,000 Oregon National Guard members have been mobilized for active duty since 2003, which includes many servicemembers who deployed more than once.

At one point, the Oregon Army Guard's 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team had the largest number of citizen soldiers deployed since World War II. Between 2006 and 2007, Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix V had several hundred soldiers from five other states which comprised more than 3,500 Guardmembers in the 41st IBCT who were assigned in Afghanistan. The 41st IBCT was later deployed to Iraq from 2009-10.

Oregon National Guard spokesman Capt. Stephen Bomar said since the return of nearly 1,000 citizen soldiers and airmen in 2011 from different deployments, there will be fewer Guard members being deployed in support of Middle East operations.

"In 2012 we will have less than 400 soldiers and airmen deployed. While Oregon has more than 8,000 skilled citizen soldiers and airmen ready for deployment, the overseas missions have been scaled back due to the U.S. military's withdrawal from Iraq," Bomar said. "This is allowing us time to reset and focus on our homeland response for missions that include manmade or natural disasters."

As these high influxes of veterans return and re-enter civilian life, future benefit claims to the Veterans Administration (VA) are expected to



Members of the Oregon Army National Guard's Detachment 1, Bravo Co., 168 Aviation, during a mobilization ceremony June 5, at the Army Aviation Support Facility #2 in Pendleton, Ore.

increase as OIF-OEF veterans report injuries and other maladies related to their service.

Honorably discharged veterans and most veterans with General Discharges are eligible for veteran benefits. The availability of federal and state veteran benefits to veterans is determined by the following: Length of time in service; type of service (e.g.

Title 10, Title 32, etc.); the character of service or discharge and other factors.

ODVA's Veteran Services Administrator Tom Mann said total federal recoveries for compensation and pension for all Oregon clients who have power of attorney (POA) through the VA or ODVA during Fiscal Year 2010-11 (July 1, 2010 to Sept. 30, 2011) totaled more than \$60.5 million. Currently, ODVA has 71,713 clients under POA.

It's estimated that with more than 100,000 veterans using VA Health Care in Oregon, the demand for services will continue to increase. ODVA Director Jim Willis said these veterans and others who are entering or are currently in the VA healthcare system have the agency's focus.

"The total amount of federal VA dollars spent in Oregon during the last federal fiscal year for compensation, pension, health care, education, and construction was an amazing \$1.6 billion," Willis said. "For all they've sacrificed to serve and protect our country, and for the sacrifices their families have made, we will ensure our veterans always receive the best care and timely service that can be provided."

The first step for veterans and their families to obtain veteran benefits is to understand what benefits are available. Federal and state veteran benefits are available to most veterans. A Veteran Service Officer (VSO) will help veterans to identify the benefits for which they may be eligible, and assist in filing their federal claims for compensation.

VSO's are accredited by the VA and certified by the state. They are available in most Oregon counties at no cost to veterans and their families.

Veteran benefit information and the location of County VSOs can be found online at www.oregon.gov/ODVA/BENEFITS/ or by calling 800-692-9666.

I am a woman.
I served in the military.
I am a **veteran.**

All women who have ever served in the military are invited to participate in the 2012 Oregon Women Veterans Conference. This free event offers women veterans an opportunity to connect with other women veterans and learn about the benefits that they have earned as a result of their honorable service.

The conference will offer workshops on topics which include women veterans health, military sexual trauma, VA benefits (federal and state), employment and stress reduction.

The deadline to register for the conference is **March 10, 2012**. For more information, including conference agenda, registration, and hotel arrangements, please visit the conference online at www.oregon.gov/odva.wvc.shtml.

March 30-31



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students Helen O’Beirne, Rebecca Cohn and Ariel Linet, who researched the issue as part of their coursework for the Law and Public Service class they took in spring 2011.

Until now, either U.S. law or Pentagon policy has prohibited female troops from serving in any unit whose primary mission is direct ground combat, although they may serve in combat support roles. Countries who currently allow women to serve in combat include Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Israel, New Zealand, Norway, Serbia, Sweden and Switzerland.

Women comprise more than 15 percent of the active military, Guard and Reserve forces and more than 10 percent of the troops assigned to OEF/OIF are female.

Although none of the students have served in the military, they have sought out the opinions of many who have, and are interested in hearing from the public as they expand their efforts in the coming months. They recently signed-up former U.S. Air Force major and F-16 fighter pilot, Tally Parham, as counsel for the effort. An attorney in Columbia, S.C., Parham has been a member of the South Carolina Air National Guard since 1996.

Parham herself has flown more than 100 combat hours in the F-16 over the course of three overseas deployments, including Operation Iraqi Freedom, during which she entered hostile airspace within the first 15 minutes of the war. Her squadron’s mission was to suppress and destroy enemy air defenses.

“Women fighter pilots have been getting shot at for over a decade,” Parham said. “A surface-to-air missile doesn’t discriminate based on gender.”

During the Cold War and in prior eras, there was a clearly defined frontline with support services that really weren’t in harm’s way. That’s where women served. Today, virtually anyone in a combat zone may find themselves actually involved in combat at some point.

In January 2011, a Pentagon commission on diversity recommended that the U.S. military end its ban on women in combat roles. Some within the military have already acknowledged the blurring lines.

According to one CNN report, the former

chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, retired Adm. Mike Mullen described women’s changing wartime role in a speech in November, saying: “I know what the law says, and I know what it requires. But I’d be hard pressed to say that any woman who serves in Afghanistan today, or who served in Iraq over the last few years, did so without facing the [same] risks [as] their male counterparts.

“In a war where there is no longer a clear delineation between the front lines and the sidelines, where the war can grab you anywhere, this will be the first generation of veterans where large segments of women returning will have been exposed to some form of combat,” Mullen said.

Women are also excluded from the Selective Service System, which means that, unlike men, they don’t have to register to be available in the event of a draft. Yet, unlike the recent public drive to end the controversial “don’t ask, don’t tell” military policy, Linet said, “There hasn’t been a big push from non-military women to expand the draft to include women.”



In 1981 the U.S. Supreme Court upheld a males-only draft system in *Rostker v. Goldberg*, based on the Department of Defense (DoD) policy excluding women from combat. The 1994 combat exclusion policy, as written, precludes women from being “assigned” to ground combat units, but women have for years served in ground combat situations by serving in units deemed “attached” to ground units.

The American Forces Press Service reported in March 2011 that a commission established to study diversity among military leaders is recommending that the DoD rescind its policy that prevents women from being assigned to ground combat units below the brigade level. In their report, the Military Leadership Diversity Commission recommends that the DoD and the services eliminate combat exclusion policies for women, as well as other “barriers and inconsistencies, to create a level playing field for all qualified service members.”

Retired Air Force Gen. Lester L. Lyles, who chaired the commission, said the recommendation – one of 20 in the report and the only one specific to women – is one way the congressionally mandated body suggests the military can get more qualified women into its more-senior leadership ranks.

“When you look statistically at the demographics

in the United States, and you look at the demographics in the military, then you look at the senior leadership positions, both in officer and senior enlisted ranks, to some it may give the appearance that there are biases that prevented women and minorities from achieving those senior ranks,” Lyles said.

Coughlin said some military women serving in Afghanistan are part of FETs, or Female Engagement Teams, and work under low-level combat commanders to talk with local women in the countryside.

“Female soldiers are needed to help gather intelligence in combat zones from Afghan women and men,” she said. “They’re put into these very dangerous theaters precisely because they’re women, but then told that, because they are women, they can’t receive the same recognition, honors, awards, promotions and opportunities as men.”

DoD officials said in 2011 they will evaluate the panel’s recommendations as part of an ongoing review of diversity policies.

This article was compiled from the Virginia Law School website, Military.com, and American Forces Press Service

DOD PARTIALLY LIFTS BAN

UPDATE - The Pentagon announced on Feb. 10 that the DoD will lift parts of its ban on women serving in combat units, but only a small fraction of the force will be affected. The change will open up about 1 percent of military jobs to women, but about 20 percent of jobs across the active-duty force will remain restricted to men.

The new rules, likely to take effect this spring, will continue to bar women from serving in most combat career fields.

The biggest change will be the elimination of the 1994 ban on women serving in units that “co-locate” with direct ground combat forces. According to the report from the Defense Department’s Office of Personnel and Readiness, “This policy has become irrelevant, given the modern battle space with its non-linear boundaries.”

A prohibition on women serving with combat units below the brigade level also was revised to allow women to serve at the battalion level in select occupational specialties, according to the report. Several battalions of 300 to 1,000 troops are grouped to form a brigade.

Several restrictions will remain. The secretaries of each branch of service will retain authority to restrict women from jobs in the special operations units, jobs deemed physically demanding, and from assignment to units where privacy and separate sleeping accommodations are not feasible.



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WOMEN VETERANS: SERVING SINCE OUR NATION BEGAN

Many women in the United States can't imagine a world where they couldn't vote, get an education or join the military. They can't even begin to imagine a world without possibilities. Every March, we celebrate the women who made those possibilities a reality by acknowledging National Women's History Month.

Even though women have always played a role in our country's conflicts, it wasn't until 1901 that they were recognized as having officially served in the military. Since then, women have changed the way the United States military goes to war.

Here is a brief history of female roles in our military and the cultivating of a new generation of women with a warrior's spirit, which for more than 200 years, was almost exclusively reserved for men.

Revolutionary War

During the Revolutionary War, women served as nurses, scouts, and messengers. When the men were away fighting, the women effectively defended the settlements. Mary Hayes McCauly earned her nickname, Molly Pitcher, by carrying water and grog to her husband and other American artillerymen. She earned her fame, however, by immediately taking his place firing a cannon after he collapsed during the Battle of Monmouth. Mad Ann Bailey, an expert shot and skilled horsewoman, served as a scout, spy and messenger. Sara Fulton delivered dispatches through enemy lines. Deborah Sampson, disguised as a man, enlisted in the Revolutionary Army. Her identity was protected until injuries rendered her unconscious and near death. The treating doctor discovered her true identity, and she was quietly discharged from the Army.

Civil War

Women served on both sides of the Civil War, mostly as cooks and nurses. Some women became scouts and spies, while at least 400 women disguised themselves as men and fought in battle. Clara Barton, Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell and Louisa May Alcott served on the Union side providing both care and much needed supplies. Committed to healing spirits as well as bodies, Barton established the first National Cemetery in Arlington, Va. after the war and went on to found the American Red Cross. Sarah Edmonds, in disguise, served as a male nurse, but later became a spy in the Union's secret service.

Because female doctors were not allowed to serve in the military, Dr. Mary Walker gave up her medical practice to serve with the Union Army as a nurse.

She later volunteered to be a spy, was captured by the Confederacy and held prisoner for four months. A Congressional Medal of Honor awarded for her actions was later rescinded, along with several male recipients, when the criteria changed. A special act of Congress later restored the medal in 1976. Walker remains the only woman ever accorded the nation's highest military honor.

Spanish-American War

In 1898, some 1,500 nurses under civilian contract



Former Women's Airforce Service Pilot (WASP) Anna (Flynn) Monkiewicz, now 92, was one of only 130 of the 1,078 WASP who flew World War II fighter planes around the U.S. She resides in The Dalles.

provided outstanding care in the field and on hospital ships. One of the nurses, Clara Maas, assisted with the research into yellow fever transmission. Among the first subjects to volunteer to be bitten by an infected mosquito, she became ill with the disease and died. Maas was buried with full military honors. In 1976, the U.S. issued a postage stamp in her honor. The outstanding care provided by nurses during the Spanish-American War resulted in the formation of the Army Nurse Corps in 1901, followed by the Navy Nurse Corps in 1908. However, these women

found themselves without clearly defined roles, rank or military grade.

World War I

In 1917, when America entered the war, many women in the Nurse Corps saw duty close to the front lines and were wounded or gassed as a result. Some were imprisoned by the Germans. Since the nurses were not engaged in combat, the government refused to grant disability pay.

World War I also saw women outside the nurse corps officially in uniform for the first time. Volunteers were recruited to assume some of the clerical duties routinely done by men. This call for volunteers resulted in more than 12,000 volunteers for extended servicemen's benefits to women. Not until 1942 would women receive pay and allowances commensurate with men. However, other treatment remained unequal as marriage and pregnancy were grounds for dishonorable discharge.

World War II

During the war, more than 384,000 women served in the military. The Women's Army Auxiliary Corps was established as America prepared for World War II. Within a year, it became fully incorporated into the Army and became the Women's Army Corps (WAC), with rank, pay and appropriate benefits. Soon after, the Navy organized the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES) as part of the Naval Reserve. Women in the Coast Guard were inducted as SPAR's (Semper Paratus—Always Ready). Women served throughout the theaters of operation—as secretaries, interpreters, and intelligence operatives. Nurses once again were at or near the front lines. More than 200 were killed by hostile fire, including six Army nurses who remain buried at the beachhead on Normandy.

Also during World War II, 900 women volunteered to join the Women's Air Forces Service Pilots (WASP's). They served as flight instructors for men, ferried airplanes from the U.S. to Europe, and had the dubious privilege of towing targets so fighter pilots using live ammunition could practice on something moving. Thirty-eight WASP's were killed in airplane crashes and many more injured. Except for their pay, these women received no benefits, medical care or insurance for their on-the-job injuries, and could not even have a flag draped over their caskets until 1977 — when their service to their country was formally recognized.

SEE WOMEN VETS ON PAGE 6



WOMEN OF WAR

1) Dr. Mary Walker, the only female recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor. 2) During the Revolutionary War, women played a crucial role in nursing soldiers back to health. 3) WWII WAVE nurses. 4) First documented military nurses of American Indian (Sioux) heritage served in the Spanish-American War. 5) Salem's Blanche (Osborn) Bross (far right) served with WASP's during WWII. 6) U.S. Navy WAVE recruitment.

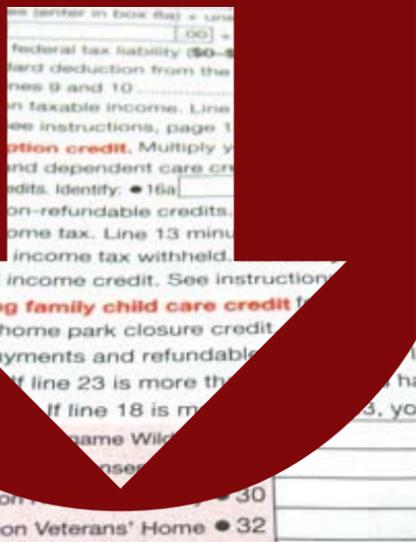


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Just enter code 12 on one of those lines and indicate the amount you would like to have donated.

Thank you for your support!

Korean War

Once again women served both in hospitals and in support roles. The development of the air evacuation system for combat casualties and the expansion of the roles of the flight nurse were pioneered during Korea and would make a significant difference in the casualty care system during Vietnam. Women and men served with Mobile Army Surgical Hospitals (MASH). These medical units served as a fully functional hospital in a combat area of operations. The units were first established in August 1945 and were initially deployed during the Korean War. The U.S. Army deactivated the last MASH unit in February 2006.

Vietnam War

The perception that women, were assigned to the "safe" places in Vietnam demonstrates an ignorance of women's contributions. From the Gulf of Tonkin in 1964 to the fall of Saigon in 1975, more than 265,000 women served in the military. Approximately 11,000 women served in Vietnam; most served as military nurses. Others worked as physicians or in intelligence, supply, administration, air support, and additional areas. Eight military nurses died while serving in Vietnam – their names are engraved on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C.

Post-Vietnam

The end of the draft and the advent of the All-Volunteer Military in 1973, along with the increasing demand for a technologically skilled soldier, the feminist movement, and the successful service of women, all played a part in the changes of the early 1970's. The two-percent cap on the number of women in the military was lifted and more and more fields were opened to females. In 1980, women were finally admitted to the service academies, bringing about expanded roles for military women.

By 1990, 100 percent of Coast Guard, 98 percent of Air Force, 59 percent of Navy and 52 percent of Army positions were open to women.

Persian Gulf War

By 1991 and the Persian Gulf War, more than 11 percent of the active duty military and 13 percent of the reserve forces were women.

The Persian Gulf was a true turning point for women in the military. For the first time they were called upon to demonstrate their effectiveness in positions previously reserved for men. Manning Patriot missile placements, flying helicopters on reconnaissance and search and rescue missions, driving convoys over the desert close to enemy positions, women were called upon to do all these jobs and more.

Close to 35,000 women served in the Persian Gulf. Their success can be measured by the fact that many new positions have been opened to women in recent years. Slowly but surely women have demonstrated that the characteristics necessary to be a successful and effective soldier are not found only in men.

Afghan-Iraqi War

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are the first in which tens of thousands of American military women have lived, worked and fought with men for prolonged periods. Through 2011, more than 200,000 female troops have engaged in Operation Enduring Freedom /Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF). This is a one in 10 female-to-male ratio.

Currently, women compose more than 15 percent of military troops. More than 17 percent of military women are officers; one percent higher than male counterparts.

The growth in seniority of women veterans is expected to continue.

In wars without front lines, there have seemingly been more combat deaths. As of February 2012, nearly 150 U.S. female servicemembers have died while serving in support of OEF/OIF.

From the Revolutionary War to the present, American women veterans have been invisible heroines. They are examples to future generations that securing our country's liberty and freedom is everyone's responsibility.




WOMEN OF WAR

1) MASH nurse washing up using her helmet as a wash basin. 2) Two female soldiers help an Iraqi woman. Through 2011, more than 200,000 female troops have engaged in Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF). To date, nearly 150 have died in action. 3) First Lt. Alisha Hamel was part of the first Oregon National Guard unit activation in 49 years with the deployment of the Army Guard's 206th Transportation Detachment in 1990. 4) Vietnam War Nurses.

COMMUNITY TURNS TRAGEDY INTO GIVING

KLAMATH FALLS – Money started appearing out of nowhere. It was mailed in, walked in and it just kept coming. That's when Klamath County Commissioner Cheryl Hukill knew how much the community loved their veterans.

After a tragic automobile accident last November destroyed the medical transport van used to transport veterans in Klamath County, residents reacted with money. And now, the van operated by Disabled American Veterans (DAV) to transport veterans needing treatment at the VA Southern Oregon Rehabilitation Center and Clinics from Klamath County, has been replaced.

Through the generosity of the county's residents, business owners and community leaders, who have a history of honoring its veterans, word spread that they needed to raise \$35,000 to purchase a new van. By Jan. 3, the "Wheels for Our Warriors" fundraising campaign had raised more than \$20,000. By mid-February, the van was paid for.

"This community loves opportunities to help or honor its veterans, and even through the tough economy and the holiday season, they came through," Hukill said.

There were many stories of selfless donations by residents. A family nurse practitioner and veteran, Michael Sheets, and his wife Caroline, donated \$10,000 to the effort, and a woman donated the proceeds from a returned engagement ring.

County Veteran Service Officer Kathy Pierce said more than 140 individuals and organizations have contributed to the success of replacing the DAV van. Wynne Broadcasting, owner and operator of five local radio stations, contributed about \$25,000 in free air-time to promote the fundraiser. Cascade Auto Group, the car dealership that was not selected to provide the new van, donated \$2,500 and included the fundraising campaign in all of their advertising. And Fred Meyer sponsored an event that raised more than \$3,600.



PHOTO COURTESY OF KLAMATH COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE

Proudly standing with the new DAV van are Cheryl Hukill, Klamath County Commissioner; Kathy Pierce, Klamath County Veterans Service Officer; Brigitte Marker, State VFW Commander; son Alex Marker and Committee Chairman Joe Spendolini.

"We are also very grateful for the hard work of our fundraising organizer, Joe Spendolini," Pierce said. "He really got the word out and encouraged people to give. It's been very exciting to see what people from all walks of life will do to help their veterans."

On Nov. 19, the accident sadly caused the death of passenger Daniel J. Reiley, 51, and injured

two other passengers who were being transported from their medical appointments. The new seven passenger van has the distinct DAV markings painted on it, but now also carries a message that honors Reiley and proudly proclaims that the vehicle was purchased by the loyal citizens of Klamath County.

The van is expected to be in service by March 1.

VA BUDGET REQUEST TOPS \$140 BILLION FOR VETERANS PROGRAMS

WASHINGTON – With more than 1 million active-duty personnel scheduled to join the ranks of America's 22 million veterans during the next five years, the president has proposed a \$140.3 billion budget for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

"As our newest veterans return home, we must give them the care, the benefits, the job opportunities and the respect they have earned, while honoring our commitments to veterans of previous eras," said VA Secretary Eric K. Shinseki.

Here are highlights of the 2013 budget request:

\$52.7B for Medical Care – This is a 4.1 percent increase over the \$50.6 billion approved by Congress for the current fiscal year. For the next fiscal year, VA estimates 6.33 million patients will use VA for health care. About 610,000 of those patients will be veterans of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The budget request would provide \$403 million for the gender-specific health care needs of women veterans, \$6.2 billion for mental health, \$7.2 billion for long-term care, \$583 million in direct appropriations for medical research, and \$792 million to support the activation of health care facilities.

Veterans Job Corps – The 2013 budget proposes \$1 billion over five years for a Veterans Job Corps,

a new effort to leverage skills veterans developed in military service for a range of jobs protecting and rebuilding America's public lands. The initiative would put up to 20,000 veterans to work on projects to restore America's lands and resources.

Disability Pay, Pensions – In the next fiscal year, VA projects it will receive about 1,250,000 claims for veterans disability benefits. This is a 4 percent increase from the 1.2 million projected for this fiscal year.

By 2013, the budget projects no more than 40 percent of compensation and pension claims will be more than 125 days old.

Other improvements funded by the new budget include a new case-management operating model that moves less complicated claims more quickly through the system, additional eBenefits self-service features that allow users to apply for benefits and manage certain aspects of their benefits accounts online, publicly available electronic medical questionnaires that allow private physicians to provide VA with exactly the information needed for veterans claims for disability compensation, and national implementation of a system for processing disability claims that will have all of VA's



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SEE BUDGET ON PAGE 8

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Not only does the Home accept monetary donations, but gifts such as magazine subscriptions, books, blankets, and personal items. If you are interested in donating your time as a volunteer, please contact the Home at 541-296-7152.

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PROMOTE MEMORIAL DAY EVENTS

If your community or organization is planning a Memorial Day event and you would like it listed in the Memorial Day section of the May-June edition of *VETS NEWS*, please submit the information to *VETS NEWS* no later than April 9.

Submit Online

To submit event notification, go to ODVA's event page at: www.oregon.gov/ODVA/Events.shtml and click on the Event Submission Form button.

Submit by Email

Submissions can also be emailed to: vetsnews@odva.state.or.us. Please include the city, location, date, time, description of the event, event contact person, and contact phone number in the email.

Submit by Phone

Event information can also be submitted by calling *VETS NEWS* at 503-373-2386.

Deadline April 9

Please note that information not submitted by April 9 will not be included in this year's Memorial Day Event section.

BUDGET FROM PAGE 7

regional offices working in a digital, near-paperless environment by the end of 2013.

Veterans Homelessness – VA's proposed budget for fiscal year 2013 contains nearly \$1.4 billion for programs that prevent or treat homelessness among veterans. This is an increase of 33 percent, or \$333 million, over the 2012 level, continuing the department's steady progress toward ending veteran homelessness by 2015.

Education Program – The Post-9/11 GI Bill will help pay the educational expenses of more than 606,000 service members, veterans, family members and survivors during the next fiscal year.

Over the past two years, VA has successfully deployed a new IT system to support processing of Post-9/11 GI Bill education claims, and has seen a dramatic improvement in the timeliness and accuracy of its processing program during the same period.

A separate funding increase of nearly \$9 million would expand the "VetSuccess on Campus" program from 28 campuses to 80, serving approximately 80,000 veterans. The program provides outreach and supportive services during their transition from the military to college.

\$233M for Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment – This is a 14 percent increase over 2012 and is focused on expanding services to wounded, ill and injured service members to ease their transition to the civilian sector. Program participants are expected to increase from 108,000 in 2011 to 130,000 next fiscal year.

\$258M for National Cemeteries – The budget supports the initial implementation of a new policy to establish a national cemetery presence in eight rural areas.

Funding in VA's Minor Construction budget request would finance \$58 million for land acquisition, gravesite expansion and columbaria projects. Also included in the budget request is funding for online mapping of gravesite locations from the IT account.

To view the full Presidential 2013 Budget, go to: www.va.gov/budget/products.asp

KOREAN WAR MASH NURSE TREATED AMERICANS, CHINESE NEAR THE DMZ

Story and photos courtesy of Jean Kirnak

I grew up in Eastern Montana. My parents were dry land homesteaders, a very popular thing to do in the early 1900s. But making a living was a problem, so before long the hills were dotted with vacated homesteaders log cabins. We didn't even know we were poor.

Thanks to WWII, there was a government sponsored program that enabled me to become a nurse. Upon graduating from high school, I joined the Army Nurse Corps. Eighteen months later the Korean War started and on Nov. 14, 1950, I was ordered to fly to Pyongyang, North Korea to join the 8076th MASH hospital at Sunchon.

All I knew about war was what I had read in history books. The United States always won wars so I knew I was in good hands. Following WWII, Russia had been helping North Korea prepare for war and on June 25, 1950, they surprised the helpless South Koreans by attacking. South Korea immediately asked the United States for assistance. President Truman and 19 United Nations countries reluctantly agreed to help. We were fighting a very small country—North Korea, in an attempt to stop the spread of communism.

After landing in Pyongyang, we bumped along in an ambulance and were shocked to see both sides of the road lined with Korean refugees, all headed south and loaded down with everything they could carry on their backs and heads.

We arrived at the 8076th MASH, a large tent hospital. The 19 doctors and 17 nurses were quartered in a long, ramshackle building in the freezing cold.

We excitedly questioned the commanding officer about the long lines of fleeing refugees we had passed but were told, "It's nothing to worry about. General McArthur assures us we'll all be home for Christmas." Of course that was not to be.

At dinnertime, a soldier accompanied us to the mess hall at the end of the long building where we stood in line for food. Beside us, on the floor, were eight or 10 covered bodies on litters against the wall. The soldier explained nonchalantly, "We usually evacuate them every day. You'll get used to it."

By Thanksgiving, we had moved north to Kunuri, about 20 miles from the Manchurian border, where we had known for some time that 300,000 Chinese

soldiers were stationed. After a good Thanksgiving dinner, including turkey, one other nurse and I headed for the pre-op tent at 1900 to start our 12-hour night shift. Since we were expecting a quiet night, only 50 army cots were set up.

By 2100, patients were flooding in. Wounded Chinese prisoners started showing up. Before the night was over, the number of wounded was over six hundred. Every available doctor, nurse and corpsman worked feverishly, crawling on the frozen tent floor, cutting off layers of sleeves and pant legs in order to take blood pressures and get blood transfusions started.

As soon as possible, off they went to the operating room where the litter was the operating table. Electricity went off from time to time and doctors had to use flashlights to complete operations.

By 0500, our tanks were moving back. I was too naïve and too busy to be scared. At 0700 I went off

duty, broke the ice on my mess gear cup, brushed my teeth, put on my pajamas, and crawled into my freezing mummy bag. At 0900 a nurse yelled, "Get up and pack up your things. Go back on duty so the day nurses can get packed. We're moving out."

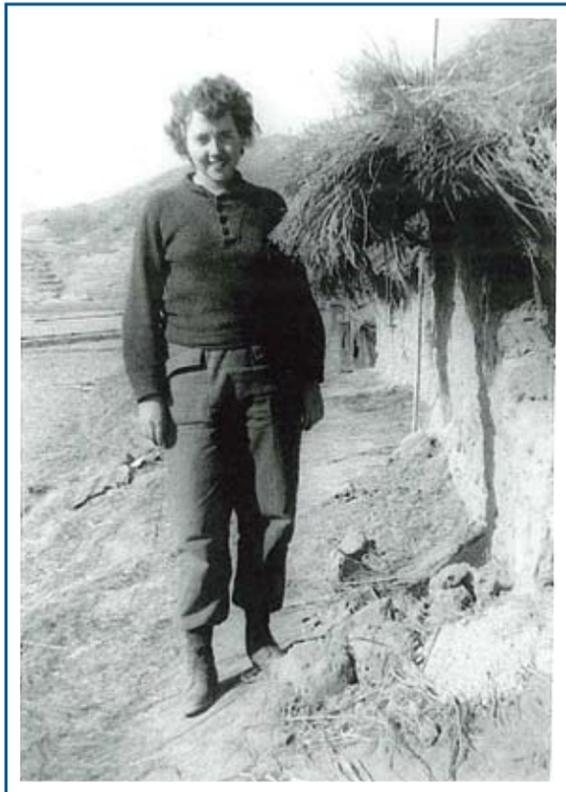
By 1500 our convoy was on its way. We nurses rode in the back of a cold army truck. Travel was slow. Because of a tip off of a Communist roadblock, Col. Van Buskirk took the right fork in the road against his orders. Troops and convoys who went left were trapped and almost all were killed or taken prisoner.

We surprised the 8063rd MASH at Anjou by showing up for dinner. They had heard we had been taken prisoner.

We joined the 171st Evacuation Hospital and for a week, hundreds of casualties went through each day, but by the end of the week the enemy was getting dangerously close.

Our convoy headed south again. The nurses were flown to an evacuation hospital in Teague, arriving at lunchtime. We overheard the conversation at the next table saying that all the nurses in the 8076th MASH were taken prisoner and possibly killed. So we introduced ourselves.

The next day we rejoined our outfit at Kaesong near the 38th parallel for a week; then headed south to Suwon where we spent Christmas and New Year. For the next few months we were truly a mobile surgical hospital, always keeping five to ten miles from the front line. The sound of the guns let us know it was



Army nurse Jean Kirnak off duty in a South Korea village.



Jean Kirnak stands in a foxhole at her South Korean base camp.



Fellow nurses in the 8076th MASH unit.

time to move. Because we were so close to the front line, we were able to render treatment quickly; thus, saving more lives than in previous wars.

The 8076th MASH was awarded the Meritorious Unit Commendation during the period from 25 July 1950 to 11 May 1951 for "displaying such outstanding devotion and superior performance of exceptionally difficult tasks as to set it apart and above other units with similar missions."

We spent February in Chunju, March in Wonju, and April in Hongchon. While there, President Truman fired General McArthur and put General Ridgeway in command. Many people in this country were shocked and outraged, but for us it was a change for the better.

In August of 1951, I returned to the States and a year later was discharged from the Army. The Montana Korean GI Bill made it possible for me to attend the University of Oregon Medical School and get a BS degree in Nursing.

While skiing at Mt. Hood, I met my future husband. After 22 years of child rearing, I returned to hospital nursing, before retiring in 1994. In 2000, my son, a high school social studies teacher, accompanied me on a visit to South Korea, financed by the Korean government out of gratitude for saving their country.

After 60 years, I think of the whole experience as a highlight of my life.

Before Jean Kirnak passed away in Dec. 2010, she said there was no 4077th MASH, as depicted in the television series. The 8063rd mentioned in her story and in the series was actually a MASH unit. Jean's story and more than 200 other veteran's stories are compiled in the ODVA's book, 150 Years of Oregon Veterans.

LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD UNIFORMS

United Veterans of Oregon needs uniforms to complete their Medal of Honor collection. This collection will be on display at the State Capitol later this year. Uniforms needed:

Indian Wars - 8th Calvary - Enlisted Uniform
 Philippine Insurrection - Officers Uniform
 Philippine Insurrection - 2 Enlisted Uniforms
 WWI - Officers Uniform

CALL MAC @ 503-428-7087

DISABLED VETERANS MAY BE ELIGIBLE FOR PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTIONS, DEFERRALS

Oregon Property Tax Exemption

If you are a disabled veteran, you may be entitled to exempt \$17,911 or \$21,493 of your homestead property's assessed value from your property taxes.

To qualify, veterans must be:

- Certified by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) or any branch of the United States Armed Forces as having disabilities of 40 percent or more; or

- Be a veteran who served with the United States Armed Forces and is certified each year by a licensed physician as being 40 percent or more disabled.

Surviving spouses/partners of veterans who have not entered into a new marriage or registered a

domestic partnership may also be eligible.

To claim this exemption, file a Disabled Veteran or Surviving Spouse Exemption Claim form on or before April 1 of the year for which you're claiming the exemption. For more details call the Oregon Department of Revenue or visit www.oregon.gov/DOR/forms/property/veteran-tax-exemption_310-676.pdf.

Oregon Property Tax Deferrals

Disabled veterans can "borrow" from the state of Oregon to pay property taxes to the county.

To qualify, veterans must be determined eligible to receive or be receiving federal Social Security disability benefits due to disability or blindness.

Disabled veterans who are not receiving Social Security Disability benefits do not qualify for the Disabled program.

If you qualify, the Oregon Department of Revenue (DOR) will pay property taxes to the county on Nov. 15, 2012. Six percent on the taxes are deferred and a lien will be placed on the property. All taxes plus interest and fees must be repaid.

After initial approval for the program, qualifying household income must stay below the limit (\$40,500 for 2012).

Applicants must file their requests with their local county assessor's office on or before April 15.

For more details, visit www.oregon.gov/DOR/forms/property/deferral-disabled-senior_490-015.pdf.

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VETS4WARRIORS: A 24/7 PEER- TO-PEER COUNSELING HOTLINE

WASHINGTON – To better help National Guard and all reserve component members face the unique challenges of providing peer counseling, the Guard has unveiled its newest initiative. Vets4Warriors, a toll-free, peer-to-peer counseling hotline, will provide callers with the ability to speak with counselors on the phone or online.

The helpline will be staffed with people selected not only for their skills in counseling, but to share their backgrounds and experiences to help the servicemembers calling to resolve their own issues more effectively. They will be able to provide empathy, understanding and a wide variety of tools to help today's service member fight the fight on the front lines and the home front, said Col. Gregg Bliss, the Army National Guard's Soldiers and families support division chief.

"The peer support hotline allows service members of any reserve component to call the center 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and discuss any issues, challenges or problems they have with a peer counselor," Bliss said.

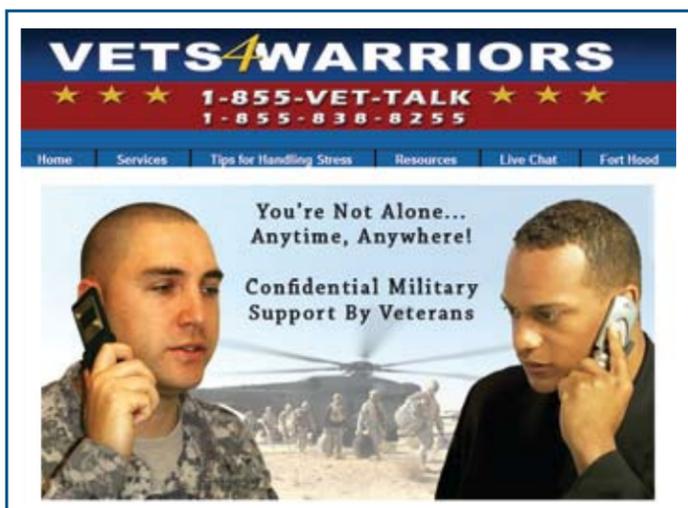
Anonymous, peer-to-peer counseling is an effective method to assist with self-development skills with the potential stigma that some service members may associate with seeking help. It's a key step in letting people know there is no stigma in asking for help and it is okay to not be okay. Bliss added that once the servicemember reaches out to Vets4Warriors, "There's an inherent understanding of what the individual may be going through, plus you have the empathy and the mutual camaraderie when talking to a peer or someone with a similar background or experiences."

The Guard Bureau has been working with many of the national support agencies, and a variety of services will be provided to include non-clinical (legal, financial) and referrals for clinical services (substance abuse, behavioral health). The counselor will try to match them to any of the resources available.

The program, to be run by the Army National Guard, will be based at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey in Newark, N.J., which has an extensive background relating to this type of helpline.

"This is not considered a suicide prevention hotline, nor is intended to provide clinical behavioral health services. It had to be anonymous, it had to be a relationship between the servicemembers and their peer counselor," Bliss said. "And while [it is] encouraged you utilize your peer support network and your family and your chain of command, it's not a requirement."

To learn more about Vets4Warriors, or to speak with a counselor, service and family members can call the Vets4Warriors toll-free hotline at 1-855-VET-TALK (838-8255), or go to: www.Vets4Warriors.com.



VETERANS' SERVICE OFFICERS

County	Phone	Service Officer
Baker	541-523-8223	Jane Chandler
Benton	541-758-1595	Don Johnson
Clackamas	503-650-5631	Janice Harlan-Raisl
	503-650-5768	Rick Rutherford
	503-650-5631	Gina Thomas
Clatsop	503-440-8310	Philip Simmons
Columbia	503-366-6580	Grace Clark
Coos	541-396-3121, Ext. 362	Mary Ann Sackett
Crook.....	541-447-5304	Angela Gilley
Curry	866-298-0404	Kimberly O'Neal
Deschutes	541-385-3214	Keith Macnamara
Douglas	541-440-4219	Mary Newman
Gilliam	541-384-6712	Bryan Hunt
Grant	541-575-1631	Bob Muenchausen
Harney.....	541-573-1342	Guy McKay
Hood River	541-386-1080	Vacant
Jackson	541-774-8214	Renee Burgdorf
Jefferson	541-475-5228	Patricia White
Josephine.....	541-474-5454	Lisa Shipley
Klamath	541-883-4274	Kathy Pierce
Lake	541-947-6043	G. Don Boone
Lane	541-682-4191	Joseph Reiley
Lincoln	541-574-6955	John Reed
Linn	800-319-3882	Kim Grooms
Malheur	541-889-6649	Connie Tanaka
Marion.....	503-373-2085	ODVA
Morrow	541-922-6420	Linda Skendzel
Multnomah	503-988-3620, Ext. 25005	Katie Pereault
Polk.....	503-373-2085	ODVA
Sherman	541-565-3408	Bryan Hunt
Tillamook	503-842-4358	Bill Hatton
Umatilla	541-278-5482	Peggy Raines
Union	541-962-8802	Byron Whipple
Wallowa	541-426-3155, Ext. 241	Linda McIntyre
Wasco	888-804-1817	Vacant
Washington	503-846-3060	Eric Belt
Wheeler.....	800-982-1172	Bryan Hunt
Yamhill	503-434-7503	Debbie Gill

Service Organizations	Phone	Service Officer
American Legion	503-412-4771	Greg Demarais
Blinded Veterans Association	541-265-9087	Frank Armstrong
Disabled American Veterans	503-412-4750	Robert Lougee
Military Order of the Purple Heart	503-412-4770	Jennifer Burt
Paralyzed Veterans of America	503-412-4762	Ken Fink
Veterans of Foreign Wars	503-412-4757	Jack Zule

State Offices-ODVA	Phone	Service Officer
Salem	503-373-2085	Gus Bedwell
	or 800-692-9666	Jessica Garcelon
		Leah Rickert
		Mitch Sparks
		Jerry Wilson
		Doug Yerke
Portland	503-412-4777	Deanna Erhardt
		Donna Hunt
		Ron Kincaid
		Linda McMillan
		Ed Van Dyke

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Meetings of the Advisory Committee are held quarterly. For meeting dates and locations, please call 503-373-2383. (Special needs will be met for those who have a disability.)

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WHERE EVERY DAY IS VETERANS DAY

VETS NEWS

March | April 2012
Jim Willis, Director

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WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH: SALUTING WOMEN IN UNIFORM



Law School Confronts U.S. Ban on Women in Combat, Draft

More than 200,000 women have served in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and more than 130 have died in Iraq alone. Yet frontline combat duty, with its risks and rewards, is not officially an option for American women serving in the military.

A group at the University of Virginia School of Law wants to change that, and is seeking out litigants to win women the official right to serve in combat roles—and to qualify for the draft as well.

“Our goals are to gain official recognition for those women who have been placed in harm’s way

in the course of line of duty, and to expose a gender classification that is based on archaic stereotypes and is unconstitutional,” said second-year law student Kyle Mallinak. “We don’t just have to speculate about how women would perform in combat conditions. We know now that they’ve performed, and performed well.”

The group believes it will not be difficult to find plaintiffs for a lawsuit, but they would also be satisfied if the Department of Defense institutes a policy change first. Mallinak has joined efforts with law professor Anne Coughlin and second-year law

SEE **COMBAT LAW** ON PAGE 4

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OREGON DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS...

WHERE EVERYDAY IS VETERANS DAY

VETS NEWS

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