

[Close](#)[Print](#)

## Tsongas & Turner unveil SUPPORT Act to combat military sexual assault, extend critical resources

April 27, 2015

\*\*\* JOINT PRESS RELEASE \*\*\*

### CONGRESSWOMAN NIKI TSONGAS

*Massachusetts Third District  
Contact: Michael Hartigan  
978-459-0101*

### CONGRESSMAN MIKE TURNER

*Ohio Tenth District  
Contact: Adam Howard  
202-225-6465*

**WASHINGTON, DC**— April 27, 2015 – Congresswoman Niki Tsongas (D-MA) and Congressman Mike Turner (R-OH), co-chairs of the Military Sexual Assault Prevention Caucus, have introduced new legislation to combat military sexual assault.

The *Support Uniformed Patriots; Prevent Offenses and Restore Trust Act* (SUPPORT Act) will take critical steps to prevent retaliation, better examine and address instances of male sexual assault, improve support for victims, and more. Further details can be found below.

“The goal of this bill is right in its name – to improve support for survivors of military sexual assault. Specifically, to prevent assaults, encourage reporting, provide quality services, and reform the military justice system that too often fails survivors of these crimes. Congressman Turner and I have long shared a commitment to examining and enacting the changes needed to bring effective resources and protections to survivors and the SUPPORT Act continues to build on this effort,” **said Congresswoman Tsongas**. “The SUPPORT Act forces DOD to confront uncomfortable issues head-on, like retaliation and the stigma surrounding male victimization, which erode confidence in the system and discourage women and men from reporting. The bill also extends critical services to civilian DOD employees and needed training to ROTC commanders, making sure the military community is playing by the same rules across the board. That status quo is simply unacceptable and the SUPPORT Act takes important steps towards change.”

“The SUPPORT Act works to establish a military culture absent of sexual assault,” **said Congressman Turner**. “It is unacceptable that sexual assault remains a persistent problem. Our military community continues to face high numbers of assaults with low incidences of reporting. The SUPPORT Act will implement prevention strategies in the military, increase the climate of victim confidence associated in reporting, improve sexual assault response, and enhance system accountability. Congresswoman Tsongas and I are committed to ensure that the needs of victims are addressed and that justice be appropriately served.”

Several of the provisions in the bill were recommended by the Judicial Proceedings Panel, a group of experts who examined the military justice system and its effectiveness in handling sexual assault cases. The Judicial Proceedings Panel was put in place by legislation supported by Tsongas and Turner in section 576 of the FY2013 NDAA.

The SUPPORT Act is backed by the Service Women’s Action Network (SWAN).

“SWAN is proud to stand behind the SUPPORT Act, which will provide the much needed regulations to ensure proper training, reduce retaliation, enhance and improve access to special victims counsel, and deliver guidance on implementing changes to the UCMJ,” **said Erica Hunt, Interim Executive Director for SWAN**. “Sexual violence threatens the strength, readiness and morale of the U.S. military, undermining U.S. national security, and this measure is instrumental to gaining better victims’ protections, professionalized and impartial prosecution of crimes, and increasing individual and institutional accountability to everyone who serves.”

### The SUPPORT Act:

- Requires sexual assault prevention and response training for all Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) personnel
- Requires the DOD to create a comprehensive strategy to prevent retaliation and protect those who experience it, as well as improved training for commanders
- Provide a way for the DOD’s civilian employees to gain access to the successful Special Victims Counsel program

- Enhances Special Victims Counsel (SVC) Program, ensuring advocates receive systematic training and an evaluation process is put in place
- Requires the DOD to better train and educate servicemembers about the sexual assault of men; provide the medical and mental health needs specific to male survivors; and develop Department-wide metrics in order to better understand the issue and address it.
- Prevents a sexual assault survivor's mental health records from being released without an order from a military judge
- Requires the Department of Defense to implement changes to the military justice system in a way to ensure fair and equal treatment across the services

####