



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
VETERANS' AFFAIRS
Chairman Phil Roe, M.D.

H.R. 91: The Building Supportive Networks for Women Veterans Act

Background:

While women have served in the military since the American Revolution, women have only relatively recently come to represent a significant portion of the veteran population. Today, there are more than 2 million women veterans in the United States, representing 9.2 percent of the total veteran population.

Women veterans transitioning from active duty experience readjustment issues similar to their male counterparts, yet there are indications that military service may affect women differently than men. Research has shown that women exposed to stressful situations like combat or military sexual trauma react differently than their male counterparts, and female veterans commit suicide at nearly six times the rate of other women.

In addition, women veterans differ from their male counterparts in that they often lack access to peer support opportunities with fellow women veterans once they have separated from service. For example, [a 2014 report by the Disabled American Veterans \(DAV\)](#) found serious gaps in every aspect of the programs that serve women veterans, including health care, employment, finance, housing, social issues, and the eradication of sexual assault.

H.R. 91 would require the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to carry out a permanent program to provide reintegration and readjustment services in group retreat settings to women veterans newly separated from service in the Armed Forces after a prolonged deployment.