

[VIDEO: Veterans Back Bipartisan Initiative to Change VA Culture, Honor Women Veterans](#)

Washington, DC (March 22, 2017) – Ahead of today’s testimony by Chief of Staff [Allison Jaslow](#) before a joint meeting of the Senate and House Veterans Affairs Committees, IAVA joined with bipartisan members of Congress to introduce the ‘Deborah Sampson Act.’ Rolled out yesterday in a press conference on the grounds of the US Capitol, the Deborah Sampson Act is a comprehensive bill to recognize and improve services for women veterans, marks the first big win of IAVA’s historic women veterans campaign, [She Who Borne the Battle](#), and is a sign of the campaign’s momentum in its first week. Launched on Monday, #SheWhoBorneTheBattle aims to forever change the landscape in America to better recognize and support women veterans.

Video of yesterday’s press conference announcing the bill can be found [here](#), and photos can be found [here](#).

In addition to asking Congress to support a change to the VA’s non inclusive motto, The Deborah Sampson Act addresses gender disparities at the VA to ensure that women veterans are getting equitable care. This bill will provide for enhanced access to VA care and will ensure women veterans are getting the benefits they have earned through their service.

“In IAVA’s most recent member survey, only 27 percent of women veteran respondents felt that the American public respects their service,” said Paul Rieckhoff, Founder and CEO of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. “We’re going to change that. But we can’t do it alone. On behalf of IAVA’s over 425,000 members and supporters I want to thank our champions in Congress for their leadership on the Deborah Sampson Act. Together we will forever change the landscape in America to better recognize and support women veterans.”

IAVA worked closely with Senators Jon Tester and John Boozman and Representative Elizabeth Esty to craft and introduce the ‘Deborah Sampson Act’ and IAVA Members will be visiting with Congressional offices all week to garner additional support as our #StormTheHill week continues.

“Women are courageously signing up to serve our country at a higher rate than ever before and we need to make sure every resource is available to them when they return from deployment,” said Tester, Ranking Member of the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee. “This bill will help change the VA’s culture to recognize the women who have served. I’m honored to introduce this legislation to empower women veterans, honor their brave sacrifice, and ensure the VA is holding up its end of the bargain to our sisters, mothers and daughters.”

“The changing face of our military requires us to reexamine the services and care we’re providing our veterans. We need to improve services to ensure we’re meeting the unique needs of today’s entire veteran community,” said Boozman, a member of the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee. “This bill eliminates remaining barriers to access and quality of care these brave women earned.”

“Supporting those who put their lives on the line to defend our freedom is not a Democratic issue or a Republican issue. The promise we made to our veterans is fundamental to who we are as Americans. It’s on all of us to keep that promise,” said Rep. Elizabeth Esty, a member of the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee. “More than 2 million women have worn the uniform in service to this nation, and they face unique obstacles to care when they return home. The Deborah Sampson Act will help us fulfill our commitment to support these brave Americans by expanding access to the quality care women veterans need to stay healthy and provide for their families.”

The Deborah Sampson Act does the following:

- Empowers women veterans by expanding peer-to-peer counseling, group counseling and call centers for women veterans,
- Improves the quality of care for infant children of women veterans by increasing the number of days of maternity care VA facilities can provide and authorizing medically-necessary transportation for newborns,
- Eliminates barriers to care by increasing the number of gender-specific providers and coordinators in VA facilities, training clinicians, and retrofitting VA facilities to enhance privacy and improve the environment of care for women veterans,
- Provides support services for women veterans seeking legal assistance and authorizes additional grants for organizations supporting low-income women veterans,
- Improves the collection and analysis of data regarding women and minority veterans, and expands outreach by centralizing all information for women veterans in one easily accessible place on the VA website.

The Deborah Sampson Act gets its name from [Deborah Sampson](#), a woman who disguised herself as a man in order to serve in the Continental Army during the American Revolutionary War. She was wounded in 1782 and spent half of her life fighting to be recognized for her service. She is one of a small number of women with a documented record of military combat experience in the Revolutionary War.

A [fact sheet](#) on The Deborah Sampson Act can be found here and full text of the bill can be found online [HERE](#).