



## DACOWITS: Articles of Interest

### WELLNESS

#### [Military Hospital Care Is Questioned; Next, Reprisals](#)

*(21 Dec.) New York Times, By Sharon LaFraniere*

Employee's claim women in labor were denied epidural anesthesia and maternity wards were left short-handed. "I wanted it on the record that I did everything I could to shut that place down," said Dr. Lebaron, who has since left. "I was angry that active-duty women, including me, had to deliver our children in an unsafe hospital."

#### [Soldier Stands Up for Ethics Online](#)

*(24 Dec.) DVIDS <Video>*

An Army NCO is working to improve soldiers' online ethics after viewing offensive material on social media.

#### [New Measure Protects Troops In Custody Battles](#)

*(26 Dec.) Politic, By Jen Judson*

A provision in the new National Defense Authorization Act says state courts are now not allowed to use past, present or future deployments as the sole factor when making custody decisions.

### ASSIGNMENTS

#### [Guard soldier among 1st group of women to head to Ranger school](#)

*(24 Dec.) Stars and Stripes, By Lindsey Whitehurst*

A Utah National Guard soldier will be among a handful of women going to the grueling U.S. Army Ranger school as part of the first steps toward integrating the elite combat unit

#### [2015 outlook: SEALs to unveil decision on women's roles](#)

*(27 Dec.) Navy Times, By Meghann Myers*

Special warfare is the only Navy branch closed to women, but 2015 is the year in which officials hammer out whether they'll integrate female sailors into the elite SEAL and Special Warfare Combatant Crewman communities.

### EXTRA

#### [Women may serve in close combat roles by 2016, say Fallon](#)

*(19 Dec.) BBC News*

A government-commissioned report on the ban on women serving in close combat roles called for more research to assess the physical demands involved. Defence Secretary Michael Fallon said armed forces roles "should be determined by ability and not gender".

#### [Husband in war zone, she starts serving state](#)

*(22 Dec.) Journal Gazette, By Niki Kelly*

Sen. Amanda Banks, R-Columbia City, took the oath of office Tuesday while her husband Jim Banks served 11,000 miles away in Afghanistan.

**Female veterans battling PTSD from sexual trauma fight for redress**

*(25 Dec.) The Washington Post, By Emily Wax-Thibodeaux*

Some health centers, for instance, only recently opened female restrooms. Women who go to VA centers for treatment say they are routinely asked whether they are waiting for their husbands or are lost.

**2015 outlook: 4 new uniforms coming (Female uniform changes)**

*(28 Dec.) Navy Times, By Lance M. Bacon*

Feedback from ongoing wear tests will be incorporated into final designs in 2015, as part of Navy leadership's push to outfit women in the same uniform styles as male peers.

**Local Vet Recalls Tough Transition to Civilian Life**

*(29 Dec.) WLOS ABC <video>*

Cynthia Robertson was a staff sergeant in the Army for 10 years, serving two tours in Afghanistan and one in Iraq. She says the transition to civilian life can be challenging for military members.

## **New Measure Protects Troops In Custody Battles**

It's been a long fight for Rep. Michael Turner and a long fight for parents in the military involved in custody disputes. But the drive to protect military parents from losing their children in custody battles is finally over.

A provision in the new National Defense Authorization Act says state courts are now not allowed to use past, present or future deployments as the sole factor when making custody decisions.

The passage of the legislation "goes right to the heart of providing security to military families," Turner said.

The Ohio Republican, who chairs the House Armed Services Tactical Air and Land Forces Subcommittee, took up the cause years ago when he heard of Lt. Eva Slusher, a Kentucky National Guardsman, who had struggled for several years to get her daughter Sara back after her ex-husband was awarded custody shortly after she returned from a one-year stateside deployment at Fort Knox, Ky., in 2004.

When Slusher deployed in 2003, she agreed to let her ex-husband take care of Sara, but did not relinquish legal custody of her. But when she was preparing to pick Sara up after her deployment, her ex-husband refused to give up her daughter.

Slusher took her ex-husband to court expecting the judge to order Sara's father to give her back, but instead the judge determined Sara should live with her father because Slusher's deployments were viewed as a "potential stability issue," she said.

"I was surprised and shocked that could happen and, honestly, going into it, didn't think it was a possible outcome," Slusher told POLITICO.

While Slusher spent two years in court appealing to get her daughter back, she also took her fight to the Kentucky National Guard Association and managed, with the help of a Kentucky state senator, to change the law there. "That was passed, no problem," she said.

Slusher regained custody of her daughter in October 2006.

Diving into the issue, Turner learned various states had different laws, or a lack thereof, pertaining to how deployments are considered in child custody cases. The lack of uniformity among the states, Turner said, was giving ex-spouses an opportunity to venue shop, as many custody battles can involve several states.

Even more pressing, the problem was having an adverse effect on military readiness and morale and could be directly linked to causes of military suicides, Turner found. So he determined federal legislation would be necessary to provide uniform protection.

But not everyone was on board when Turner first proposed a federal fix.

Legislation has passed the House nine times via the National Defense Authorization Act, twice as a stand-alone bill by voice vote and once as part of another veterans-related bill. But, for several different reasons, the provision never cleared the Senate until this fall.

"When we first proposed the legislation, there was a question from the Senate on whether or not this even happens," Turner said. The legislation in other years, for unrelated reasons, was "thrown overboard," he added.

Then-Defense Secretary Bob Gates was originally against the idea, believing states had their own laws and that legislation at the federal level was redundant. Also, Slusher said, Gates didn't realize the magnitude of the issue. But after speaking with her, he changed his mind. Since then, both then-Defense Secretary Leon Panetta and his successor, Chuck Hagel, have backed the provision.

In a letter to Turner in 2011, Gates wrote, "The Department of Defense has been officially opposed to federal legislation on this matter. However, I have been giving this matter a lot of thought and believe we should change our position to one where we are willing to consider whether appropriate legislation can be crafted," adding he believed the "benefits outweigh the concerns."