

SUBJECT: Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS)
September 2022 Request for Information (RFI) 15

1. **RFI 15:** The Committee understands the Defense Department will continue to ensure that servicewomen have access to reproductive health care in the wake of the Supreme Court decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* (known as *Dobbs v. Jackson*), which ended constitutional protections for abortion. As the Defense Department continues to examine this Supreme Court decision and evaluate policies to ensure Service members, dependents, beneficiaries, and Defense Department civilian employees are provided seamless access to essential women's health care services, as permitted by federal law, the Committee is concerned about potential impacts to servicewomen. The Committee requests a written response from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, and National Guard addressing the following:

a. How are the Military Services assuring Servicewomen's privacy and confidentiality are maintained while leave requests are routed through various levels within the Servicewomen's chain of command? Additionally, are the Military Services preserving records (e.g. leave requests, electronic messages, etc.) that could potentially be used against Servicewomen in states that criminalize abortion?

2. Response:

a. Army leave policies do not require Service members to share the specific reason they are requesting regular leave. However, inherent in the authority and responsibilities conferred upon a unit commander is the commander's discretionary authority to grant or deny leave. In exercising their discretion, unit commanders are expected to consider the health and welfare, morale, and needs of individual Service members requesting leave, as well as the commander's responsibilities in maintaining the readiness and good order and discipline of his or her unit. Thus, Service members may be required to disclose the minimum amount of information necessary regarding the purpose of the requested regular leave to allow the unit commander to make an informed decision on whether to grant the leave. A review of existing policies and procedures to determine whether additional action may be necessary to support our Service members is ongoing.