

Written by Jeff Giertz  
Tuesday, 17 April 2012 14:56

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Pentagon will implement several elements of Holley Lynn James Act

Washington, DC – Rep. Bruce Braley (IA-01) joined Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey today to announce new Department of Defense directives that will implement several provisions of Braley's Holley Lynn James Act – almost a year to the day after the bill's introduction.k,

The announcement came after Panetta and Dempsey joined Braley and a small group of House members to discuss addressing sexual assault in the military.

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Braley introduced the [Holley Lynn James Act](#) last April to strengthen the legal process for addressing claims of sexual assault in the military and improve policies to prevent sexual assault and domestic violence. The bipartisan bill is named after Holley Lynn James, a constituent of Braley's who was killed by her husband while both were in the service. James had filed complaints against her husband, who was supposed to be restricted to his barracks the night he murdered her.

"The Pentagon's new directives incorporating aspects of the Holley Lynn James Act to improve the military's response to sexual assault in their ranks is a positive development," Braley said. "Today's announcement is an important step in creating the zero-tolerance atmosphere that commanders and leaders frequently talk about with regards to these crimes. I will keep pressing the Department of Defense to put their words into action when they say one sexual assault is one too many and to better care for the victims of these crimes."

The directives announced by the Pentagon today in many instances were based on language contained in Braley's Holley Lynn James Act.

First, the Pentagon will now require sexual assault allegations be immediately reported to senior commanders, who will then consider if the case should proceed to a court martial. This provision ensures that sexual assault cases are considered by officers with maturity and experience and that these cases are not dismissed as a result of personal bias.

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Second, the Pentagon also recognized the need for better prevention and oversight of the Department sexual assault policy. The Pentagon will take steps to improve the investigation and prosecution of sexual assault cases by setting up Special Victims Units in each service branch that are trained to investigate sexual assault crimes, appropriately counsel victims and interview offenders, and give them the ability to better recognize the characteristics and behaviors of offenders. The Department of Defense will also require all servicemen and women to receive training on the Department's Sexual Assault Prevention policy within 14 days of entering service.

The Pentagon also agreed to support Guard and Reserve members who may be sexually assaulted while on active duty but who have seen the investigation and prosecution of their assault go cold when they return to their civilian lives. The new directives will create a way to ensure these individuals have full access to the same resources available to active duty members to seek justice.

A number of provisions of the Holley Lynn James Act focusing on the prevention of sexual assault were previously enacted into law as part of the 2011 National Defense Authorization Act.

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