

Loebsack Calls on Pentagon to Explain Decision to Overturn Sexual Assault Case

Written by Vonnie Hampel
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Washington, D.C. – Congressman Dave Loebsack and a bipartisan group of Members that serve on the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) have demanded answers from the Secretary of Defense after a sexual assault conviction and sentence were overturned. Loebsack is the only member of the Iowa delegation to serve on the House Armed Services Committee, which has oversight of policies concerning sexual assault prevention and prosecution. As a member of the committee and the Military Sexual Assault Prevention Caucus, Loebsack has worked to strengthen sexual assault and harassment prevention and response policies, including provisions signed into law as part of the FY 2013 National Defense Authorization Act requiring independent reviews of how sexual assaults are prosecuted under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ).

“As a parent of a step-son and daughter-in-law who serve our nation in the military, ensuring their safety on both the battlefield and on base is one of my top priorities. Sexual assault in our Armed Forces is unacceptable. A zero-tolerance policy must include effective prosecution and support for victims. I have worked to make improvements to sexual assault and harassment prevention and response policies in our military, but we still have a long ways to go to protect victims and to better prosecute these cases.

“I have very serious questions that remain unanswered in the recent case where a sexual assault conviction and sentence were overturned. As a member of the Armed Services Committee, I will work to ensure adjudicated cases cannot be overturned without proper oversight and evidence and to ensure better prosecution of these cases.”

The letter was in response to the overturning of a conviction of an Air Force officer for sexual assault. Last year, Air Force Lt Col James Wilkerson was found guilty of sexual assault by a panel of military officers and a judge sentence him to a year in prison and dismissal from the Air Force. However, Lt Gen Craig Franklin, who was the convening authority for the court-martial and reviewed the finished case and sentence, dismissed the charges against Lt Col Wilkerson under a rarely used provision of the UCMJ.

A copy of the letter sent to the Department of Defense can be seen [here](#).

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