

## Resolution No. 407

### SEXUAL ASSAULT INCIDENT REPORTING AND TREATMENT

WHEREAS, the Defense Department's annual report on Sexual Assault in the Military Services indicated that 6,172 service members reported being sexually assaulted in fiscal year 2016. The Department of Veterans Affairs also reports that 25 percent of female veterans and one percent of male veterans respond "yes," that they experienced a Military Sexual Trauma (MST), defined as sexual assault or repeated, threatening sexual harassment experienced during military service, when screened by their VA provider; and

WHEREAS, it is widely held that a far greater number of sexual assault survivors do not come forward while on active duty due to embarrassment, lack of command action when they do file reports, or for fear of personal and/or professional reprisal, to include real or perceived "red flags" in their military personnel folders; and

WHEREAS, DOD's "Zero Tolerance" campaign has made great strides to encourage prevention efforts and tighten field reporting and managerial oversight, to include providing restricted and unrestricted options for reporting a sexual assault. DOD has begun keeping records that provide evidentiary support of the assault and its effects on service members, and has taken steps to improve the actions of first responders, as well as to provide confidential counseling and other specialized treatments. Yet many sexual assault survivors are not aware of such services, which could help alleviate mental health issues commonly associated with sexual assault; and

WHEREAS, although VA does not require MST victims to have first reported an incident or to have a VA disability rating before receiving treatment, more can still be done inside DOD with regards to prevention, treatment and reporting; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge DOD to continue strengthening its "Zero Tolerance" campaign, particularly in efforts of prevention, by encouraging all sexual assault and harassment survivors to report their attacks, to provide victims with proper medical and mental health care, and to aggressively investigate every reported incident and punish attackers as appropriate.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief  
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS