

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 20

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

BY SENATORS WIELECHOWSKI, French, Gardner, Dunleavy

Introduced: 2/10/14

Referred: Judiciary

A RESOLUTION

1 **Urging the United States Congress to pass S. 967, the Military Justice Improvement Act**
2 **of 2013, including the requirement that a decision to take a charge of sexual assault**
3 **arising in the military to court martial be made by high ranking and experienced**
4 **military prosecutors outside the chain of command.**

5 **BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

6 **WHEREAS**, according to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, about
7 one in five women and one in 100 men who have served in the military report having
8 experienced sexual trauma while serving in the military; and

9 **WHEREAS**, according to the United States Department of Defense, Sexual Assault
10 Prevention and Response Office, 71 percent of victims of military sexual trauma are under 24
11 years of age and of lower ranks; and

12 **WHEREAS**, according to a recent study by the United States Department of Defense,
13 more than 26,000 sexual assaults were committed in the military in 2012 alone, and of these,
14 fewer than 3,000 were reported, 880 were filed, and only 302 went to trial, with a 79 percent
15 conviction rate; and

1 **WHEREAS** women and men who are victims of sexual assault while serving in the
2 military are more likely to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, and 40 percent of
3 homeless women veterans are victims of military sexual trauma; and

4 **WHEREAS** it is almost impossible to guarantee that reports of sexual assaults will
5 stay confidential while passing through the chain of command; and

6 **WHEREAS** victims fear that their reports of sexual assault will be cause for
7 punishment, and the threat of retaliation is enough to silence many victims; 62 percent of
8 victims who reported their sexual assaults experienced some form of social, administrative, or
9 professional retaliation within their units; and

10 **WHEREAS** a defined reporting system outside military command is needed to
11 provide a secure and confidential atmosphere; and

12 **WHEREAS** National Guard and Reserve forces who experience military sexual
13 trauma should also be able to receive care for military sexual trauma from the United States
14 Department of Veterans Affairs facilities at no cost; and

15 **WHEREAS** the need to treat military sexual trauma does not end with discharge of
16 the victim from the military, but requires intensive mental health counseling to allow the
17 healing process to progress; and

18 **WHEREAS** victims of military sexual trauma may experience depression, anger,
19 irritability, numbness, difficulty falling or staying asleep, nightmares, difficulties with
20 concentration and memory, drug and alcohol abuse, isolation, difficulty maintaining
21 relationships, and physical health problems; and

22 **WHEREAS** S. 967, the Military Justice Improvement Act of 2013, now pending in
23 the United States Senate, would reform how the military addresses sexual assault; and

24 **WHEREAS**, with bipartisan sponsorship, the Military Justice Improvement Act of
25 2013 is supported by the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, Service Women's Action
26 Network, Protect Our Defenders, and the National Women's Law Center;

27 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature urges the United States
28 Congress to require that the decision to take a charge of sexual assault arising in the military
29 to court martial be made by high ranking and experienced military prosecutors outside the
30 chain of command, which will create a confidential reporting process and give victims of
31 military sexual trauma the justice they deserve; and be it

1 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature urges the United States
2 Congress to pass S. 967, the Military Justice Improvement Act of 2013.

3 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Barack Obama, President of
4 the United States; the Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr., Vice-President of the United States and
5 President of the U.S. Senate; the Honorable John Boehner, Speaker of the U.S. House of
6 Representatives; the Honorable Harry Reid, Majority Leader of the U.S. Senate; the
7 Honorable Chuck Hagel, United States Secretary of Defense; and the Honorable Lisa
8 Murkowski and the Honorable Mark Begich, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young,
9 U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress.