



# *Northwestern Division*

## *Legislative Bulletin*

**December 2020**

Health care for women veterans is a major concern. There are roughly 2 million living women Veterans. The VA Mission Act increased Veterans access to healthcare, adding some new benefits like “easier access, high quality care at VA facilities, virtually through telehealth and in the community”, but did not specifically cover issues for women.

H.R. 3224, known as the Deborah Sampson Act, has passed the House. S. 514, known by the same name, passed through the Veterans’ Affairs Committee with an amendment and has been placed on the Senate calendar under general orders (Calendar #536).

The **Deborah Sampson Act** aims to make invisible women veterans visible and to create equitable access to healthcare, housing, legal services, and other resources and benefits. (I googled the definition of the Deborah Sampson Act.) Deborah Sampson was a Massachusetts woman who disguised herself as a man to serve in the Continental Army during the American Revolutionary War. She is one of a small number of women with a documented record of military combat experience in that war. She served 17 months in the army under the name “Robert Shurtleiff” of Uxbridge, Massachusetts, was wounded in 1782, and was honorably discharged at West Point, New York, in 1783.

Not all services are available to women or are gender specific. Many are not enrolled in the VA system because they don’t know services are available to them or they do know and are not enrolled for various reasons.

S. 514 has 54 co-sponsors. You can look up the sponsor and co-sponsors so you can see who you need to write, call or email. Let’s push to get this passed.

Second, if you know any women veterans you could bring up a conversation to ask if they are enrolled. Whether they are or not you can make them aware of this legislation. If they are not, suggest they might want to investigate it.

The VA System has improved a lot. And maybe more so in some areas than others. We all see the stories in the news and on social media. Our Women Veterans deserve the benefits that are given through the VA and at least deserve the option if they want to utilize them.

Gentle Reminder -\_Mid-year reports are due to the Division Legislative Chairmen with a copy to the National Legislative Chairman, ntramm@juno.com by **January 5**. Donna Dillard did a great job of listing the questions to answer in the November bulletin. As part of your narrative report, you may find it easier to complete if you include key points such as:

- How did you educate members in the legislative issues promoted by The American Legion and how did your members employ those methods?
- What legislative activities (town hall meetings, legislative receptions) did members attend in their communities and departments? What suggestions did members have to improve those activities? Please describe.
- How did members connect with their local and state offices and develop relationships with their elected officials and what were their successes?

It really is this simple! Follow the Program Action Plan – all the information and material are there for you.

Resources are:

[www.legion.org/legislative](http://www.legion.org/legislative)

[www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov)

[www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov)

google “Deborah Sampson Act”.

*For God and Country,*

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