Republicans and Democrats on Women in Combat

By Phyllis Schlafly

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The subject of women in the military was addressed by both political parties at their national conventions last month, and it's no surprise that Republicans and Democrats came to diametrically opposite conclusions. After the two parties adopted sharply conflicting platforms in Cleveland and Philadelphia, Congress must now try to reconcile the same conflict in the annual defense policy bill known as NDAA, because the House version of that bill reflects the Republican view while the Senate version includes the Democrat position.

The Republican platform states, "We oppose unnecessary policy changes including Selective Service registration of women for a possible future draft. We reiterate our support for both the advancement of women in the military and their exemption from direct ground combat units and infantry battalions."

The Democratic platform states, "We are proud of the opening of combat positions to women." The platform doesn't specifically say that women should be forced to register for Selective Service, as the Senate version of NDAA requires, but it does call for adding the so-called Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution, which would have the same effect.

Assigning women to combat positions would be a radical social experiment in the redefinition of gender, yet there's been deafening silence in the media. Congress hasn't held a single hearing about it.

Meanwhile, there's new evidence proving what most of us already knew, namely that women just can't perform the tasks that combat jobs require, and don't want to anyway. A reporter for the Associated Press managed to get the numbers of women who tried and failed to qualify for combat roles in the Marine Corps in the six months since President Obama opened all combat positions to women.

A grand total of seven female Marines tried out for combat in the first six months since they were allowed to do so, but only one woman passed the grueling physical fitness test. Another 167 women applied for "intelligence, logistics or communications" jobs in combat units, but those jobs don't require the same level of physical fitness.

The AP helpfully explained the math: when six out of seven female recruits failed to pass the test, that's a female failure rate of 85.7 percent. By comparison, 40 of about 1,500 male recruits failed the same test, for a male failure rate of only 2.7 percent.

The combat test included standard athletic measures of running and lifting which an extremely fit, athletic young woman might be able to do. But the test also included combat maneuvers such as belly crawling and evacuating a casualty, which almost no woman can do successfully.

On July 6, an amendment was offered by the newest member of Congress, Warren Davidson, who won a special election on June 7 to succeed former Speaker John Boehner. The new Congressman discovered that the Selective Service Administration isn't funded by the Pentagon budget after all.

So Davidson introduced a very simple amendment to the General Government Appropriations Act: "None of the funds appropriated by this Act may be used to change the Selective Service System registration requirements in contravention of section 3 of the Military Selective Service Act."

In offering his amendment, Davidson pointed out that there's been no discussion of this radical social change outside Washington, D.C. "Many families back home aren't aware of this, and especially many young women aren't aware of this."

He added, "We should be clear to the courts that we don't need them or want them to come in and decide the rule." Davidson's amendment passed by the narrow vote of 217-203, with 24 Republicans joining all but 2 Democrats voting against it.

The Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. Robert Neller, told the AP how hard it is to open combat to women on the same basis as men. To begin with, most female Marines "are not interested at all" in combat roles, but "some want just to make it gender neutral and we'll just figure it out."

If only one woman qualifies for combat, will the Marine Corps assign her to an otherwise all-male combat unit? Apparently yes, but to provide a buffer for that woman, "the Marines will also put a female officer and a female senior enlisted leader in the combat units doing a noncombat job such as intelligence or logistics" whose physical requirements are less demanding.

Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-CA), a former Marine who served in Iraq and Afghanistan, said, “This is what happens when you have a military decision made for political ends. If women can’t do it, they’ll say it’s not fair” and standards will have to be lowered.

That’s where another plank of the 2016 Republican platform should apply: “We reject the use of the military as a platform for social experimentation. Military readiness should not be sacrificed on the altar of political correctness.”

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