from Phyllis Sch1afly

The Women in Combat Commission

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The Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in Combat has been wrestling all year with the issue of how to advise the Pentagon on this controversial issue. It's still an open question.

The issue is not whether women can be assigned to combat duty in the U.S. Armed Forces, but whether they should be. The question we should ask is not whether some women can perform admirably in many military situations (they can), but whether the U.S. Armed Forces are going to rank fundamental American-family values above the feminist goal of a sex-neutral society.

You can almost tell the age of any American by the way he or she uses the term "the war." Many of the women who are lobbying for assigning women to military combat today are so young that, when they say "the war," they mean last year's Gulf War, which was practically devoid of real combat.

Young people in that age group have no shared experiences with those who use the term "the war" to mean a prolonged war with heavy casualties. Nor do they understand how large a part the military draft played for decades in the lives of those who lived through the earlier wars of this century.

The feminists carried their equality demands to the U.S. Supreme Court in the 1981 case called Rostker v. Goldberg. The brief filed by the National Organization for Women labeled women's exemption from the military draft "blatant and harmful discrimination," and said it consigns women to a "second-class status."

The Supreme Court ruled that it is constitutional for Congress to exempt all women from the military draft and from draft because draft registration, conscription, and military combat are all one continuum -- any military draft is for the purpose of raising combat troops. So, women can be constitutionally exempted from the draft and from draft registration only because they are not eligible for combat duty.

There are many cultural, societal, family, pregnancy, and practical reasons why women should not be drafted. But when the Supreme Court states that combat-

exclusion is the reason for exempting women, then that is the law of the land, and we must make our decisions in the light of that ruling.

This means that a decision to assign servicewomen to military combat does not affect volunteer servicewomen only. This decision is a life-threatening and a family-threatening danger to every girl who is draft-age now or in the future. We have no crystal ball -- we cannot know what the future holds in terms of war or a reinstated draft that could impose involuntary conscription on young women.

The women-in-combat decision should not be made on the basis of what is desired, by volunteer servicewomen' It should be made for the welfare of the 99.8 percent of American women who have not chosen a military career. This includes women who believe that their family comes first, women who do not want to spend their childbearing years trying to do what the entire world (including Israel) has always considered man's work, and women who believe that mothering is more important than flying a plane or driving a tank.

The American culture honors the obvious and eternal differences between men and women, and expects them to be respected by the military. American women do expect their fathers, brothers' husbands and sweethearts to defend them from the bad guys of the world, and the American culture will not accept the image of men at home while women go off to fight the enemy.

Furthermore, we expect the military to adhere to a standard of honesty about the differentials between male and female performance, rather than continue to deceive the public through dual standards, set-asides and quotas, combined with intimidating allegations about “sexual harassment” against men who criticize the dual standards.

Now that the cat is out of the bag about dual standards from the testimony of the West Point officer who was cross-examined in the Virginia Military Institute caser s€ expect the U.S. Armed Forces to leve1 with the American people about the differences between men and women. Rationalizations that “equal effort” can replace equal performance are a fatal mistake because there will be no “gender-norming” in a real combat situation.

We hear the constant refrain that “times have changed,” but there is no change whatsoever in obvious facts of human nature such as that men and women differ in so many important ways, that healthy young women are apt to get pregnant, and that there is a profound difference between male-to-male bonding and male-to-

female bonding -- a factor that can make the difference between life and death on the battlefield.

Women serve our country admirably, both on the home front and in many positions in the U.S. Armed Forces. But they should not be assigned to military combat.