

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 26, 2013

Chairman Dick Durbin
Defense Subcommittee
Senate Committee on Appropriations
122 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Ranking Member Thad Cochran
Defense Subcommittee
Senate Committee on Appropriations
125 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515


Dear Chairman Durbin and Ranking Member Cochran,


As the Committee begins its consideration of the Fiscal Year 2014 defense appropriations bill, we are writing to encourage your committee to make funds available for each Service to adopt a program of Special Victims' Counsels for sexual assault victims.


We are pleased that the Air Force has adopted a pilot program to make Special Victims' Counsels (SVC) available to airmen who have been victims of sexual assault. Implemented on January 28, 2013, the SVC program has already represented 224 sexual assault victims as of March 29. The Air Force SVC program provides victims with independent, attorney-client privileged representation, empowering and advocating on behalf of victims and ensuring that their rights are respected. We understand from General Welsh that this program has real value and helps victims to become more resilient and informed throughout a sexual assault investigation or prosecution.

We therefore urge you to include language in the appropriations bill to ensure that all Services have funding available to provide SVCs to victims of sexual assault. We firmly believe that our country's soldiers, sailors, and Marines would benefit from the SVC program as much as our airmen have. Implementing an SVC program in each Service would provide equitable treatment for all service members in the aftermath of a horrific crime and would ensure that they are not alone as they go through the often daunting process of investigation and prosecution. Thank you for your consideration of this request and for your continued support of our service members.

Sincerely,


RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senate


BARBARA BOXER
United States Senate


KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND
United States Senate