

Statement to NCMNPS Public Meeting, Jacksonville, May 17, 2018

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One challenge that the Commission faces is to deal with two views about women in the military. One is that keeping military women from combat zones and combat assignments is a form of job discrimination. The other is that putting women in danger in these ways is a cowardly form of abuse. These views have implications for whether both women and men volunteer to join the military.

I already have written to the Commission about evangelical Christian denominations that have studies expressing concern about sending women into danger and into combat. These denominations include about 7 – 10% of the people in the United States. I have the web addresses for the studies with me today. I believe that some Orthodox Jewish groups and Muslim groups have similar concerns.

Knowing how the Commission should respond to such concerns is challenging. I see several possible responses, each with limitations. For example, the Defense Department could update conscientious objection policy (DoDI 1300.06) to explicitly include military people who come to believe that women should not be sent into danger. The Academies and War Colleges could train officers to support people who chose to join the military when they were quite young, but who later come to question military policy about women after learning about issues raised in the denomination studies. Routinely providing information about these studies to evangelical girls and young women being recruited into the military and into military-supported programs like JROTC could be part of the informed consent procedure. A form of military support branch could be designed that allows participants to remain in the U.S. with no risk of overseas assignments. Such alternatives could provide starting points for conversation.

I have done human resources projects with the military, am an established scholar in the field of international cultural diversity and have worked with Chaplain Endorsers and religious leaders on matters related to women in the military. I would be glad to consider assisting the Commission on such topics.