

**OPENING STATEMENT OF U.S. SENATOR JACK REED  
RANKING MEMBER, SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**SD-G50  
DIRKSEN SENATE OFFICE BUILDING  
Tuesday, February 2, 2016**

**To receive testimony on the implementation of the  
decision to open all ground combat units to women.**  
*(As Prepared for Delivery)*

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to join you in thanking our witnesses for joining us today to provide testimony on how their respective services will successfully integrate women into combat occupations and the ground combat forces in particular.

I would like to thank each of you and the services you represent, as well as the Air Force which is not represented here today, on the deliberative processes you have taken in studying this issue over the past several years. Secretary Panetta and General Dempsey initiated this effort in 2013, and since then each service has conducted research and studied performance to validate occupational standards for every military occupation. While today's hearing is focused on the difficult and challenging aspects of integration within the ground combat forces, it is important to remember that hundreds of thousands of positions have been opened to service by women over the past several years. Many of these positions were considered, not too long ago, as available for men only. This assumption has been disproven by the performance of female personnel in those occupations already opened to all genders.

Now that the decision to open all positions to women has been made, it is important that we now turn our focus to the successful integration of females into these positions. Leadership is the key to ensuring both individual and collective success, as it was when other military occupations were opened to women. I have every confidence that each of you will implement this decision smartly and successfully.

Part of this process, as I mentioned, is the statutory requirement to establish gender-neutral physical, mental, and technical occupational standards which any service member, male

or female, must meet as a condition to serve in any particular occupation, including the combat arms. This is critical. As many members have said over the past several years, it is important that our war-fighting capability not be reduced. There is a tendency, however, to equate “war-fighting capability” solely with physical capability. Fighting and winning wars, as I’m sure our panelists know well, involves much more than that. I believe that the full and successful integration of women into the combat arms, for a variety of reasons, will strengthen and enhance our war-fighting capabilities.

Integrating women into ground combat units also must be reflected in how and who we recruit, and how we assess capabilities at the recruit stage to maximize successful service and minimize attrition. Not all women will be able, or even interested, in serving in the combat arms. But I believe many, particularly those with the required physical ability and the necessary mental toughness for service in the combat arms, may now be drawn to the ever greater and equal opportunities provided by military service. I look forward to hearing how the services plan to recruit and assign individuals for service in the combat arms, what plans you have for developing predictive tests at the recruit stage to assess the potential success of a given recruit, and what challenges you foresee.

Finally, I believe it’s important for all the Services, but particularly the Army and Marine Corps, to develop plans and strategies to mitigate the physical stress and toll that a career in the ground combat profession has on every soldier and marine, men as well as women. Part of successful implementation will be ensuring the ability to serve a full career, regardless of gender.

I thank you all for your time and your expertise, and look forward to your testimony.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.