Last Wednesday night, President Obama signed the 2013 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) into law. In the end, it included 19 amendments to significantly reform Department of Defense sexual assault and sexual harassment policies. This landmark bill has the largest number of sexual violence provisions ever signed into law.

Specific to sexual violence- the law now provides for:

- Prohibiting the military from recruiting anyone convicted of a sex offense
- Mandatory separation of convicted sex offenders
- Insurance coverage for abortions in cases of rape or incest for service women and military family members
- Retention of restricted report documentation for 50 years if so desired by the victim
- The creation of “Special Victims Units” to improve investigation, prosecution and victim support in connection with child abuse, domestic violence and sexual assault cases
- Allowing victims to return to active duty after separation to help prosecute sex offenders
- The creation of an independent review panel comprised of civilian and military members that will closely examine the way that the DOD investigates, prosecutes, and adjudicates sexual assaults
- Required sexual assault prevention training in pre-command and command courses for officers
- Improved data collection and reporting by the military on sexual assault and sexual harassment cases
- Annual command climate assessment surveys to track individual attitudes toward sexual assault and sexual harassment
- A review of unrestricted sexual assault reports and the nature of any subsequent separations of victims who made those reports
- Notification to service members of the options available for the correction of military records due to any retaliatory personnel action after making a report of sexual assault or sexual harassment
- Requirement for DOD to establish a policy for comprehensive sexual harassment prevention and response
- Language that will allow better oversight and tracking of DOD’s implementation of sexual assault provisions from prior Defense Authorizations in order to ensure they are being enforced properly