

# U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Supports the introduction of new, bipartisan Military Justice Improvement and Increasing Prevention Act

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WASHINGTON, D.C. —U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin is supporting the introduction of new bipartisan legislation, the *Military Justice Improvement and Increasing Prevention Act*.

The bipartisan legislation, led by Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), chair of the Senate Armed Services Personnel Subcommittee, would professionalize how the military prosecutes serious crimes by moving the decision to prosecute from the chain of command to independent, trained, professional military prosecutors, and provides for several new prevention provisions such as more and better training for commanders and increased physical security measures, while ensuring that commanders still have the ability to provide strong leadership and ensure a successful command climate.

“The men and women in our armed forces must have an environment where they can serve free of sexual harassment and assault, but it’s clear they don’t have that right now,” **said Senator Baldwin**. “The system is broken and it’s long past time we fix it. I am proud to join this bipartisan effort to provide solutions to the ongoing crisis of sexual assault in the military. Our service men and women deserve better and we need to pass the legislation to bring about much needed change.”

“Sexual assault in our military is an epidemic and it’s clear that the current system

is not working for survivors. Despite repeated efforts to protect our women and men in uniform rates of harassment and assault continue to rise while prosecutions decline. Congress has a solemn responsibility to protect our service members, and right now we have more work to do,” **said Senator**

**Gillibrand.** “The Military Justice Improvement and Increasing Prevention Act takes important, commonsense steps to deliver justice for survivors of serious crimes and prevent sexual assault in our armed forces. I am proud to introduce this new, bipartisan legislation and I thank all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for being my partners in this fight. With strong support in Congress, the Pentagon, and the White House this is a defining moment for passage and I’m confident we can get it done.”

One in 16 women in the military reported being groped, raped, or otherwise sexually assaulted in 2018, the most recent year data has been published by the Department of Defense (DoD). DoD data also show there were nearly 21,000 instances of sexual assault — a massive increase over the 14,900 estimated in the previous 2016 survey. The number of women in the military who experienced sexual assault increased by 50%, from 8,600 in FY2016 to 13,000 in FY2018.

[Recent reporting](#) details the critical shift in Congress and the Pentagon to finally pass legislation that delivers major, long-overdue changes in military laws that have prevented justice. Military justice experts agree that the decision to prosecute from the chain of command to independent- in a report submitted to the Senate and House Armed Services Committees they argued that a senior judge advocate office outside of the chain of command should be charged with prosecutorial discretion in felony cases.

The *Military Justice Improvement and Increasing Prevention Act* would take critical steps to create a more professional and transparent military justice system for serious crimes — including rape and sexual assault, murder, manslaughter, child endangerment, child pornography, and negligent homicide — and address the need for sexual assault prevention that DoD has not implemented.

**Specifically, the bipartisan legislation would:**

- **Move the decision on whether to prosecute serious crimes to independent, trained, and professional military prosecutors, while leaving misdemeanors and uniquely military crimes within the chain of command.** By moving this work off of the commander's plate, it will empower commanders to focus on mission critical activities—while specifically preserving the authorities that a commander needs to provide strong leadership and a successful command climate.
- **Ensure the Department of Defense supports criminal investigators and military prosecutors** through the development of unique skills needed to properly handle investigations and cases related to sexual assault and domestic violence.
- **Require the Secretary of Defense to survey and improve the physical security of military installations** - including locks, security cameras, and other passive security measures - to increase safety in lodging and living spaces for service members.
- **Increase, and improve training and education on military sexual assault throughout our armed services.** This training would help shift the culture in the military and ensure that the armed services can enforce a no-tolerance zone for sexual assault and other grievous crimes.

In addition to Baldwin, the legislation is also cosponsored by Senators Chuck Grassley (R-IA), Joni Ernst (R-IA), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Ted Cruz (R-TX), Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Angus King (I-ME), Michael Braun (R-IN), Dick Durbin (D-IL), Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Michael Bennet (D-CO), Rand Paul (R-KY), Chris Coons (D-DE), Mark Kelly (D-AZ), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Bob Casey Jr. (D-PA), Maggie Hassan (D-NH), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Cynthia Lummis (R-WY), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV), Raphael Warnock (D-GA), Alex Padilla (D-CA), Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), Gary C. Peters (D-MI), Tim Kaine (D-VA), Tina Smith (D-MN), Bob Menendez (D-NJ), Martin Heinrich (D-NM), and Tommy Tuberville (R-AL).

The *Military Justice Improvement and Increasing Prevention Act* is endorsed by VFW, IAVA, Vietnam Veterans of America, Protect our Defenders, National Alliance to End Sexual Violence, SWAN, National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV), Common Defense, Veterans Recovery Project.



An online version of this release is available [here](#).