

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COALITION TO PROTECT AMERICAN SERVICEMEMBERS CALLS ON PRESIDENT TRUMP TO RESCIND RESTRICTIONS ON TRANSGENDER TROOPS

NEW YORK, NY -- August 26, 2017 -- The Coalition to Protect American Servicemembers (CPAS), a group of organizations joining together in a nonpartisan effort, dedicated to honoring and protecting all those who have served and are currently serving in the military, today released the following statement in response to the announcement that President Donald Trump signed a policy memo restricting transgender individuals from serving in the military:

“We stand with [SPARTA](#), a leading organization of LGBT servicemembers and veterans, and their statement: ‘As transgender service members, we are and have always been soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen first. We serve our country honorably, in good faith. Transgender service members are currently deployed to various locations around the world in defense of our Nation. The average transgender service member has eight years of service and served two or more deployments. Deployments are a staple of military life. Transgender service members have shown they are fully capable of doing the job they are called upon to do, and so we will continue until directed otherwise.’

In addition, we, the Coalition to Protect American Servicemembers, call on President Trump, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Department of Defense to rescind this discriminatory policy and let our troops get back to focusing on their jobs. There are approximately 7,000 known transgender troops serving on active duty today, and roughly 14,000 in the total force, including the reserve component. We stand with these transgender heroes who continue to selflessly serve our nation.”

Founding members of the Coalition to Protect American Servicemembers include [Common Defense](#), [NYC Veterans Alliance](#), [Intersections International](#), [Pathfinder Labs, Inc.](#), [No One Left Behind](#), [Think Broader](#), [Veteran Advocacy Project](#), and [Equality New York](#). Spokespeople from these organizations have released the following statements:

“Preventing Transgender Americans from openly serving in the U.S. military is blatant discrimination, especially after years of study has concluded that integration will not have an effect on military readiness. This policy has caused massive disruption and greatly undermined unit cohesion in a critical time when more troops are preparing to deploy overseas. The President and Secretary of Defense must reverse this destructive policy before it does any more damage.” -- **Nicole Vanderheiden, Common Defense, Transgender Iraq Veteran, U.S. Air Force 2006-2012**

“Our nation cannot afford to turn away talented, capable Americans from military service at a time when we most need them. Right now, thousands of transgender men and women are serving honorably and capably in the U.S. Armed Forces, and countless more transgender veterans have proudly served our nation, many of them with honor and distinction in combat. We want these servicemembers and veterans to know that we stand with them, and that we are grateful for their service to our nation. Out of many, we are one. Equality is not a social experiment. It is a core value we serve to protect and

defend.” -- **Kristen Rouse, Founding Director of NYC Veterans Alliance, US Army Veteran, 1994-2017**

“This policy, steeped in bias and born from a lack of education and understanding, only serves to harm our military community and by extension our country. The greatest way that we can honor transgender service members and their families is to recognize their unwavering commitment to our country. They make the ultimate commitment, and sacrifice, every single day. The very idea of banning transgender individuals from serving goes against the principles upon which our country was founded, and those that our service members sacrifice their lives for. We will not stand for this injustice.”--
Frederick R. Johnson, Deputy Executive Director of Intersections International, USMC Veteran, 1969-1975

“We should not restrict those who are fit and have the desire to serve, nor should we restrict the re-enlistments and accessions of the same. Just as unit segregation based on both race and gender have now been seen to be failed and discriminatory practices, so will any segregation or dismissal of trans troops. Discrimination does more to negatively affect unit morale, as per data collected during studies on DADT, and this backdoor walking back of policy would be a significant detriment to the health and well-being of not only our current Service Members but the Veterans who understand the importance of a unified force. The military is non-partisan and non-religious, as are military policies, in order to create a cohesive fighting force not distracted by individualized belief systems. We support all Service Members, all Veterans, and all Family, Partners, and Caretakers thereof.” -- **Elana Duffy, Founder and CEO of Pathfinder Labs, Inc., US Army Veteran, 2003-2012**

"I've served with trans soldiers. I've gone to war with them. I'd do so again. All I ever cared about was whether or not my fellow soldiers could do their jobs. The military takes an oath to uphold, protect, and defend the Constitution. It's a shame our President doesn't grasp that that very document guarantees the right of all Americans to serve their country equally, without prejudice." -- **Matt Zeller, US Army, Afghan War, 2002-2016**

“Discrimination does not belong in our country and it certainly does not belong in our military. Our armed forces ensure we live in a free society, defined by the principle of equality, and yet the plan is to tell some of the very people ensuring that freedom that they are not wanted. It is unacceptable. Transgender servicemembers should be treated equally and with respect, just as servicemembers of any race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation should be. This is not about politics; it is about the heart and soul of our country's ideals. VAP will not turn our backs on *anyone* who has raised their hand for our nation.” -- **Coco Culhane, Founder and Director of Veteran Advocacy Project (VAP)**

“Equality New York stands with our partners to fight this baseless attack on trans* people. The decision of the President to ban thousands of people of trans* experience from service in the military is unjustifiable, baseless discrimination, plain and simple. There is no way to look at the history of service and sacrifice made by trans* people or the research about the presence of out trans* people in the military and come to the decision the President has. This policy will further the anti-trans* culture that leads to trans* people losing their jobs, being kicked out of their homes, or being physically attacked and murdered. We support equality and justice for all, and recognize this new

policy as a means to furthering discrimination against trans* and gender non-conforming people in the country at large.” -- **Gabriel Blau, Equality New York**

The Coalition to Protect American Servicemembers calls on organizations nationwide to become members. Military, civilian, legal, for-profit, and nonprofit organizations that wish to stand behind all service members are asked to join the Coalition. Interested parties, please contact Alexander McCoy at press@commondefensepac.org.

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ABOUT THE COALITION TO PROTECT AMERICAN SERVICEMEMBERS (CPAS)

Eight organizations make up the Coalition to Protect American Servicemembers (CPAS). These diverse organizations joined together in the interest in honoring and protecting all those who have served and are currently serving in the military. For more information, please contact Alexander McCoy at press@commondefensepac.org.

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