

**Executive Office of The President
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Staff Name: **PRESIDENT OBAMA**

Document Date: **November 09, 2012**

Correspondent: **COLONEL ELLEN HARING**

Subject/Description: **WRITER IS ONE OF A SMALL GROUP OF WOMEN WHO
FILED A LAWSUIT AGAINST THE DEPARTMENT OF
DEFENSE CHALLENGING THE CONTUNED EXCLUSION
OF WOMEN FROM LARGE PARTS OF THE MILITARY
SOLELY ON THE BASIS OF THEIR SEX - REQUESTS THE
PRESIDENT TO CHANGE THIS POLICY**

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November 9, 2012

Dear Mr. President,

Mothers and fathers lie to their daughters when they say, "There is nothing you can't do." This is especially true for female airmen, soldiers, sailors, and Marines who know that the United States Government excludes women from elite training programs and direct combat roles because of their sex, denying them the opportunity to provide the highest level of service to their country. I and thousands of other women in the military are completely excluded, by policy not by law, from a vast number of elite jobs in the US military.

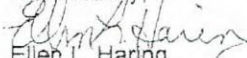
The ramifications of such policies are vast and far reaching. Most cultures and countries draw many of their heroes and leaders from their combat veterans. We read great books about them and we watch true and fictitious movies about them. And, they are always about men. The night you announced that we had killed Osama bin Laden was a bitter sweet moment for me. I was so proud to be part of the United States military. But I was also saddened by the fact that I knew that there was not a single woman on that Seal Team who risked everything on that fateful night. The subsequent books, documentaries and movies that have been and will be written won't show any women on that raid. Women aren't our heroes, but not because we don't want to be. We aren't because we aren't allowed to be and this has terrible consequences for the way we see and treat women.

I am writing this letter to you to bring a movement to your attention. Five months ago a small group of us brought a law suit against the Department of Defense challenging the continued exclusion of women from large parts on the military solely on the basis of our sex. In the five months since we filed our lawsuit I have received many emails, facebook posts and phone calls from men and women in the military offering support and sharing personal stories of their experiences with and as female combatants. One male pilot said, "My first combat sortie (Op ALLIED FORCE over Serbia, 1999) was next to a shit hot...."girl"....who was the coolest cucumber in the whole cockpit and led me through the whole ordeal. Couldn't tell what gender she was through all the flight gear though....can't understand why the dinosaurs won't let go of the past. Keep fighting!"

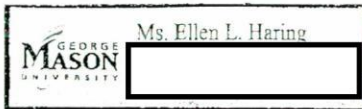
Women have only been allowed to fly combat aircraft since 1992 and this was due to a Presidential directive signed by President Clinton. Congress had removed all legal exclusions in 1991 after the first Gulf War but DOD refused to budge on their policy of exclusion. All of the predictions about how women couldn't handle the physical and emotional requirements and how we would disrupt unit cohesion have proven completely false and today over 60 women successfully fly combat aircraft that we were excluded from less than 20 years ago. It is time for the United States military to become a truly merit based, gender blind 21st Century institution.

So no matter how smart, capable or brave your wonderful daughters are you may not tell them that "there is nothing you can't do" because you know better. But...you have the power to fix this.

Respectfully,


Ellen L. Haring
Colonel, United States Army

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The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

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