Concerns Over U.S. HIV and Hepatitis B Military Policies

December 9, 2014

U.S. Representatives Barbara Lee (D–Calif.) and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R–Fla.) have sent a letter to Chuck Hagel, secretary of the Department of Defense (DOD), raising several concerns about the DOD's personnel policies regarding members of the U.S. military living with HIV or the hepatitis B virus (HBV), according to a recent press release from Rep. Lee.

The letter addresses Section 572 of the nearly 2,000-page National Defense Authorization Act of 2014, which gave the department 180 days from its release to examine and justify certain aspects of military policy that discriminated against people living with HIV and HBV.

These policies include statutes that automatically exclude people living with either virus from enlistment, keep those who become infected after enlistment from certain military assignments and restrict their consensual sexual relationships.

Reps. Lee and Ros-Lehtinen seek greater transparency about who wrote the DOD's recommendations, and which medical journals and studies were used to justify the report's recruiting policies. They also want the DOD to clarify what criteria commanding officers will use to determine whether a retained HIV-positive service member is fit for duty. In addition, the letter highlights several concerns about medical privacy rights.

Click here to read the DOD's full summary of these policies titled "Report to Congressional Defense Committees on Department of Defense Personnel Policies Regarding Members of the Armed Forces with HIV or Hepatitis B."

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