

Servicemembers and Veterans Empowerment and Support Act (H.R. 2576/S. 1245)



What does it do?

- ★ The **Servicemembers and Veterans Empowerment and Support Act** would improve the benefits process for survivors of military sexual trauma (MST).
- ★ It would expand the evidentiary standard when filing an MST claim to allow non-Department of Defense evidence like statements from family members, roommates, other veterans, and members of the clergy.
- ★ MST survivors would be able to choose whether to have needed compensation and pension exams performed by a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical professional rather than a contract examiner.
- ★ Former Guard and Reserve members would be allowed to receive MST-related mental health counseling at the VA.



Why is it needed?

- ★ In fiscal year 2023, an **estimated 6.8 percent of women and 1.3 percent of men serving on active duty were victims of MST**.
- ★ The VA disability claims process can be difficult to navigate, especially when pursuing benefits for MST-related conditions.
- ★ It would require VA to process all MST claims via specially trained teams, conduct annual accuracy reviews for claims, and study the quality of training for MST claims processing offered by the Veterans Benefits Administration.