

Victoria A. Hudson

Lieutenant Colonel

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Dear Members of Congress -

While deployed to Iraq in 2005, I was a convoy commander, leading more than a dozen convoys. The night before a mission, I'd call home and tell my wife I loved her, I missed her, and I was thinking of her. Then I'd carefully say she might not hear from me for a few days. I would not say: *I'm telling you this just in case tomorrow I'm blown up by an IED.* I would wonder silently--for there was no one I could discuss this with--would she be notified if I was wounded or killed?

The Army has a standardized form for such things, the emergency data form, DD 93. This is the document that tells a commander who should be notified when a Soldier is missing, wounded, or dead. I think it rather important that the person notified be the one person whom I love and most trust to make decisions on my behalf, my wife. My legal spouse. Especially if I am incapacitated or worse, dead, as a direct result of serving the Nation.

My spouse is not authorized to be listed as my wife or as a family member. Just, "friend."

We have a three year old who thanks to modern American culture, knows that "being married" is what you do with someone you love. How do I explain to her that her mommies are married but only sometimes? She knows the Army is where I go to work, how do I tell her that the Army doesn't consider her other mommy as part of the family, her parent or that her mommies are married?

When I tell my heterosexual neighbors and friends about the inequity for family acknowledgement or benefits, they are appalled. To think that when I am sent to war that my wife is left out of any support, might not be properly notified if I died, and would have to fight for my final benefits just makes no sense to them.

Death benefits, health care, education, recreation, and even the simple act of grocery shopping; my wife, my daughters' parent, is denied access. Because she is "not a family member or spouse." I serve and protect the Constitution, that declares all are created equal. Yet feel like my family is the unseen footnote "Except if gay or lesbian." My military family includes my wife.

Respectfully, remove the obstacles that promote discrimination against my military family.

Sincerely,



Victoria A. Hudson

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Please note: the views expressed are my own and do not reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Army.