



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on February 24, 2012

GOP Presidential Candidates Cave in on Women in Combat

With the Pentagon's announcement in early February that it plans to ease restrictions on women serving in combat roles, the bulk of Republican presidential candidates appear to have no problem putting women military personnel deeper in harm's way. As reported by the Associated Press, while the proposed new rules "are expected to continue the long-held prohibition that prevents women from serving as infantry, armor and special operations forces ... they will formally allow women to serve in other jobs at the battalion level, which until now had been considered too close to combat."



The [Stars and Stripes](#) military newspaper reported that under the Pentagon's new rules women would qualify for "more than 14,000 active-duty and reserve jobs previously off-limits to female troops. They include occupations such as combat medic, artillery mechanic, communications expert and other critical warfighting posts."

After ten years of women being exposed to the dangers of war in Iraq and Afghanistan — with over 100 of them paying the ultimate sacrifice — it appears that the majority of Americans have been sufficiently softened up on the issue and are ready to throw in the towel. [CNSNews.com](#) noted that, according to a recent [Quinnipiac University poll](#), 75 percent of Americans support allowing women to serve in combat units.

Asked during the February 22 GOP presidential debate in Arizona about their views of women in combat, the candidates by and large played up to those polling numbers, with at least three of them expressing general openness to an expanded role of women on the battlefield.

Predictably slippery, Mitt Romney said that he would "look to the people who are serving in the military to give the best assessment of where women can serve." Noting the 100-plus women who died in Iraq and Afghanistan, he expressed his belief that "women have the capacity to serve in our military in positions of significance and responsibility, as we do throughout our society."

Newt Gingrich pointed out that in the present environment of "total warfare," anyone "serving our country in uniform virtually anywhere in the world could be in danger at virtually any minute. A truck driver can get blown up by a bomb as readily as the infantrymen." He added that "you ought to ask the combat leaders what they think is an appropriate step, as opposed to the social engineers of the Obama Administration."

Rick Santorum, who had been criticized for earlier suggesting that it may not be appropriate for women to serve alongside men in combat, subtly backpedaled on that opinion, saying that while he still had concerns, "I would defer to at least hearing the recommendations of those involved" in making the decisions about where women serve.

On February 10, during an appearance on NBC's *Today Show*, Santorum said that "when you have men



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and women together in combat ... men have emotions when you see a woman in harm's way. I think it's something that's natural, that's very much in our culture to be protective, and that was my concern." He added that the issue is "is how men would react to seeing women in harm's way, or potentially being injured or in a vulnerable position, and not being concerned about accomplishing the mission."

Ron Paul used the question as an opportunity to address the issue of America entangling itself in military conflicts where it has no business being involved. "The problem is the character of our wars," he said. "... We're in wars [where we] shouldn't be involved. So I don't want even the men to be over there. I don't want women being killed, but I don't want the men being killed in these wars."

Paul added, however, that "if we're defending our country ... believe me, men and women will be in combat and defending our country, and that's the way it should be. But when it's an offensive war, going where we shouldn't be, that's quite a bit different."

Over the past few days Senator Scott Brown (R-Mass.) has been trotted out in the media to lend his support to the issue. "Brown, a lieutenant colonel and 32-year veteran of the Massachusetts National Guard, told [Defense Secretary Leon Panetta] in a letter that the recent decision to permit women to serve closer to the front was a positive step but didn't go far enough," reported that [Boston Globe](#).

Wrote Brown, a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee: "We have an obligation to expand the professional opportunities available to women, especially considering their sacrifices. Doing so in my view would improve military effectiveness, not detract from it." He added that keeping combat positions closed to women would affect "their ability to develop a career path in the military and advance to higher ranks." Brown told Panetta that "I believe women should be able to serve in front line positions if they desire. We should not waste time endlessly studying this issue and getting bogged down in bureaucratic red tape."

What Brown refers to as "red tape" other concerned veterans and military experts call necessary barriers crucial to the nation's fighting readiness. A little over a year ago, as a military advisory commission put the final touches on a [diversity study](#) that recommended the Pentagon scrap 200 years of tradition and law keeping women from serving directly in combat, military experts were warning of the folly of such a move. They pointed out that the action in Iraq and Afghanistan were poor examples of what female personnel would face if called upon to fight day in and out next to — and against — hardened, prepared, and determined male warriors.

"Few women have truly been in ground combat" in Iraq and Afghanistan, Lieutenant Colonel Robert Maginnis (U.S. Army, retired), a senior fellow for national security with the Family Research Council (FRC), told [The New American](#) in February 2011. He noted that the few who found themselves involved in actual combat took up arms out of dire necessity, not because they were part of a cohesive team of fighting soldiers — a fact that appears to be lost on those individuals, both military and political, who are pushing for women to be added to combat roles.

"Being present in hostile engagements or hit by a roadside bomb is dangerous, but not like taking the fight to the enemy," Maginnis explained. "Few women should — or have been asked to — take the fight to the enemy whether he be hiding in rocks outside Afghan villages or inside mosques in Fallujah. That is an entirely different proposition."

Colonel Ron Ray (USMC, retired), a decorated veteran of the Vietnam conflict and former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense in the Reagan Administration, served on a special 1992 presidential commission that came to the determination that women have no place in direct combat. Col. Ray told



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The New American: “Men and women are profoundly different, and those enormous differences have military significance. Across the world men and women do not compete together in sports in the high school, college, Olympic, or professional levels of sport, and it is solely because their physical differences are substantial.”

Ray, a combat veteran who lived through a brutal 1967-68 combat tour in Vietnam, including the infamous Tet Offensive, said that what holds true in athletics is of life-and-death importance on the battlefield. “From my own personal experience,” said Ray, “I can attest to the fact that physical combat, close combat, infantry, artillery, armor combat — all are profoundly more demanding than any sport, and there is no place there for women combatants.”

Elaine Donnelly, who also served on the 1992 presidential commission, noted in a report by the [Center for Military Readiness](#) that while female soldiers may be undeniably brave, “the military cannot disregard differences in physical strength and social complications that would detract from the strength, discipline, and readiness of direct ground combat units.”

But disregard centuries of tradition and common sense is precisely what Pentagon officials — guided by the Obama Administration and encouraged by legislators like Senator Scott Brown — are doing as they seek to placate women clamoring for supposed equality.

Sadly, as witnessed by the comments of the GOP presidential candidates, they will likely meet little resistance in this social engineering folly should one of them take his place in the White House.

Photo: Republican presidential candidates Rep. Ron Paul, (Texas) and former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum during a presidential debate among the 2012 candidates, Feb. 22, 2012, in Mesa, Ariz.: AP Images



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