

PREPARED STATEMENT BY
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BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON
MILITARY PERSONNEL AND COMPENSATION
OF THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
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Good morning Mr. Chairman, I am Rear Admiral Richard Cueroni, Chief of Personnel for the Coast Guard. I welcome the opportunity to address the role that women play in our Service.

I would first like to say, as the Commandant Admiral Gracey has often stated, we are committed to the full and complete integration of women into the Coast Guard.

Our early history of women's participation and contributions is similar to that of the women in the other services. More recently, in 1972, as pressure for equal treatment for women increased, we initiated new programs. First, a limited number of women were enlisted in the Coast Guard Reserve where they served in administrative and medical ratings. In 1973, we expanded our program to include women reserve officers. By early 1974, we were enlisting women into the regular Coast Guard and, in 1976, women were admitted to the Coast Guard Academy for the first time. The Academy incidently is our primary source for career officers.

As doubts concerning the capabilities and problems of women in a military environment diminished and statutory restrictions on the utilization of women in the Coast Guard were lifted, total integration commenced. By 1978, we had removed all ceilings on the numbers of women that could serve in the Coast Guard and all restrictions on assignments to specialties and units had been eliminated. Now women may serve in any specialty subject to the same qualification requirements as our men.

As a small military service, it is essential that we use all of our resources

to the maximum of their potential. Flexibility in assigning personnel to specialties and duty stations impacts on our ability to accomplish our missions. Opening all of our specialties to women has brought both the benefits and hardships of service life to them on an equal basis. They are subject to the same transfer policies and are required to meet the same standards for advancement as men, including required sea duty. They have accepted the challenges and are performing well.

I must emphasize that the absence of statutory restrictions, our size and the nature of our peacetime missions has enabled the Coast Guard to move ahead with a policy of assimilation.

Statistically, about five percent of our total force are women. They are serving in all fields and specialties. We have women officers that are commanding officers of commissioned cutters and isolated stations overseas and as both fixed and rotary wing pilots. Our enlisted women serve in all ratings and are routinely involved in dangerous rescue and law enforcement missions.

Do we have problems? Yes. We are concerned because reenlistment rates for women are consistently lower than for men by about ten percent. We believe this is a result of many women who decide to marry and start a family, choosing to leave the Service. With regard to marriage, it is our policy to assign married service couples to the same geographic location, but not to the same ship or within the chain of command where one might supervise the other. Unfortunately, collocation is not always possible, especially if one member is in a rating that has limited assignment flexibility. Sometimes these couples

may have to separate for a tour so that they can fill a career enhancing assignment. The problem can be even more acute when a spouse has a civilian career and does not have job flexibility. Finally, child care in any two career household is, at best, difficult to arrange. These difficulties definitely affect retention.

We believe that, throughout the Coast Guard, we are seeing increased acceptance of women in the work place as supervisors based on their capabilities. They are proving themselves to be working equals. This attitude change is true even among the "old salts". While we have had some early problems and incidents of sexual harassment, they were dealt with quickly and firmly. Now sexual harassment claims within the Service are few.

While we have eliminated the institutional barriers to women serving in any specialty, they have tended to remain in the so-called "traditional" rates. Presently, 72% of our rated women are serving in the traditional administrative, clerical and medical specialties. We would like to see more women in rates such as Damage Controlman, Electricians Mate and Machinery Technician. However, our experience has shown that it is better to allow a person to choose, rather than establishing arbitrary quotas for assignment to specialties. We are confident that changing attitudes and the development of appropriate "role models" will result in better distribution among the ratings within the Service. I think there is little doubt that women have proven themselves to be true Coast Guard professionals in all respects. We are convinced that, as women achieve to positions of greater responsibility, any residual bias will virtually disappear. Our leadership is dedicated to that end.

Mr. Chairman, women in the Coast Guard have proven they can do the job and they are here to stay. They are an integral part of our readiness posture. We will continue to bring women aboard, hopefully in greater numbers, and once trained keep them with us. As our Commandant is fond of saying, we can't afford to ignore the large pool of talent in 51 percent of the population.

I will be pleased to answer any questions the committee might have.