

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 12, 2010

The Honorable Bob Filner
Chairman
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
House of Representatives
335 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Filner:

The Oprah Winfrey Show is expected to highlight the issue of servicemembers losing custody of their children due to their military service this week. This is an injustice that could be remedied by passage of HR 4469, which is pending before your committee. We are writing to ask the full Veterans' Affairs Committee to mark up HR 4469 during the 111th Congress to continue Congress' bipartisan commitment to protecting the rights of our servicemembers

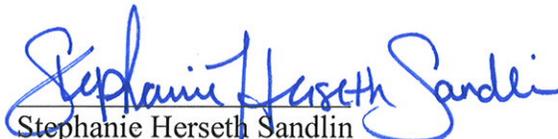
As you know, HR 4469 is legislation which prohibits family court judges from permanently modifying a child custody order while a service member-parent is deployed. The bill also precludes these judges from taking custody away from service members based on their past or future deployments. This bill has passed the House on numerous occasions with strong bipartisan support, as either a stand-alone suspension bill, or as part of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). This year, in addition, to being included in the FY 2011 House-passed NDAA, HR 4469 passed the Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity on July 15, 2010.

The Oprah Winfrey Show will profile problems encountered by women in the military this week. We expect that episode to air October 15, 2010. During the taping of this program, Oprah spoke with Eva Slusher, who had custody of her child prior to her deployment, arranged to leave her child with her ex-husband during her deployment, and whose ex-husband refused to relinquish custody after her deployment. Only after two years and 25 thousand dollars, was Eva able to regain custody of her child.

As the Veterans' Affairs Committee concludes its business for the 111th Congress, it is our hope that the Committee will take up HR 4469. Additionally, as you continue to look at this issue, we invite you to talk with Eva personally, and listen to her story. Our men and women in uniform deserve the peace of mind that their military service will not be used against them in their child custody disputes.

For additional information, your staff may contact Joe Heaton
(joseph.heaton@mail.house.gov) in Rep. Turner's office at 5-6465 or Eric Bursch
(eric.bursch@mail.house.gov) in Rep. Herseth Sandlin's office at 5-2801.

Sincerely,


Stephanie Herseth Sandlin
Member of Congress


Michael R. Turner
Member of Congress