

LGBT-Rights Organizations Challenge Trump's Transgender Military Ban



Summary: A federal lawsuit claims that Trump's ban on transgender people in the military is discriminatory.

On July 26, President Donald Trump made a shocking announcement on Twitter that he was banning transgender personnel from the U.S. military because their medical treatment was too expensive. In response to his declaration, two LGBT-rights groups have filed a lawsuit in federal court, challenging the Republican leader's move.

The lawsuit was filed in Washington in U.S. District Court on behalf of five anonymous transgender service members. Between the plaintiffs, they had a combined military service of 60 years, according to *NBC News*.

One of the plaintiffs told *The BBC* that it was a relief to come out to her commanding officer but that Trump's announcement had worried her.

"My experience has been positive and I am prouder than ever to continue to serve. I am married and have three children, and the military has been my life. But now, I'm worried about my family's future," the plaintiff said.

Trump's announcement was essentially a reversal of the 2016 decision under Barack Obama's administration that allowed transgender people to openly serve in the military.

The lawsuit filed by GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders (GLAD) and the National Center for Lesbian Rights said that the transgender ban is unconstitutional because it denies transgender service members due process and equal protection. Shannon Minter from the NCLR added that the ban will also demoralize the troops.

"The president's mistreatment of these dedicated troops will serve only to weaken and demoralize our armed forces," Miller told *The BBC*.

The lawyers involved told *NBC News* that they wanted to stop Trump from banning transgender military people, a number that reportedly has reached 15,000. They said that if the ban were to take effect, many could lose their livelihoods and retirement benefits.

"The damage is happening now," said Jennifer Levi, Director of GLAD's Transgender Rights Project. "These service members were told in June 2016 they could come out and continue to openly serve."

Defendants named in the lawsuit were President Trump and national security officials, including General Joseph Dunford, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. When asked for comment, the Pentagon declined.

On Tuesday, the American Civil Liberties Union said it also wanted to file a lawsuit. In July, they stated they would fight Trump's decision.

"This has been studied extensively, and the consensus is clear: There are no cost or military readiness drawbacks associated with allowing trans people to fight for their country. The President is trying to score cheap political points on the backs of military personnel who have put their lives on the line for their country," Joshua Block, the senior staff attorney with the ACLU's LGBT & HIV Project, told *CNN*.

Trump's claim that transgender personnel burdened the military financially has been challenged by a study from the Rand Corporation. The study said that the inclusion of trans people would add 0.13% increase in healthcare spending - approximately \$8.4 million.

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What do you think of the ban of transgender military personnel? Let us know in the comments below.

