themselves being disfigured for life? Ask any combat-experienced officer or enlisted man if he wants his daughter, his sister, or even his mother assigned to his combat unit.

I oppose the Equal Rights Amendment because it would have an adverse affect on the ability of our Army to do its job. The proposed bill would require equality in everything—women would be equally vulnerable to registration, the draft, and duty in combat divisions.

Under this bill the Secretary of the Army, for example, would no longer have the authority to decide how many or what percentage of the Active Army should be women—he would be forced to have a 50-50 ratio of men and women. Could the Army defeat our enemies under such circumstances? It is too dangerous to expose ourselves to such a risk. I urge you not to approve this bill that would weaken the defense posture of the United States armed forces. Thank you.

Mr. Edwards. Ms. Mary Lawlor.

STATEMENT OF MARY LAWLER

Mrs. Lawlor. Mr. Chairman, members of the subcommittee: I am Mrs. Mary Lawlor of Winnetka, Illinois. I served as a WAC lieutenant in the European Theater of Operations in World War II, landing in Normandy behind our American fighting men on D plus 90. My concern is with the bad effect ERA will have on national defense. Specifically, I have a strongly-held view that women should not serve in combat positions in the U.S. Army, as ERA, according to generally accepted legal studies, would make them eligible to do.

In 1943 I enlisted in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps—later the Women's Army Corps—on my 21st birthday. At that time the recruiting pitch was "Join the WAAC and release a man for combat." Thirty years later, in 1973, I was shocked to learn that Congress had rejected specific proposals to amend the ERA to exempt women from the draft and from combat. Since then I have learned there are many other flaws in ERA which I am sure will be covered by other witnesses.

Today my aim is to convince the subcommittee that ERA should be rejected because of its deleterious effect on the military. The Defense Department should not be forced to go to court to demonstrate that putting women in combat would interfere with national security. Congress should make that decision. I am convinced that those who take a contrary position are motivated by reasons other than that of improving our national security. They seek to attain a type of so-called "equality" that is impractical, unrealistic, and would hurt both sexes if put into operation.

When I was on Omaha Beach during World War II, up to my knees in mud, there was no agitation among the women soldiers to be allowed to go into the front lines; nor, I'm sure, did anyone consider using American girls in combat despite the shortage of male replacements. Today I have listened hard but I hear no chorus of voices from the female uniformed personnel, including those wonderful women you heard this morning, demanding this type of service, nor do I detect a change in the attitude of the Department of Defense, based on recent decisions on the utilization of women in the Army made by Assistant Secretary Korb in conjunction with the Department of the Army.

Because our form of government is vulnerable to concentrated pressure from special interests which do not always act in the common good, and because the Army is a disciplined organization, the Army becomes an ideal vehicle to be used by a small group, not representing a majority viewpoint, whose principal objective is social change.

Obviously, the purpose of the Army is to fight and not to force changes in our society, especially when such changes do not have universal acceptance.

While it may be argued that a woman has the right to serve in the Army wherever she is qualified, and ERA would give that right, we must remember that the vast majority of those in ground
combat would still be male. Such men have a countervailing right to have women excluded. If they are not excluded, unit effectiveness will suffer. Certainly, American citizens sent to war should be able to expect from their government the right to serve in combat units that are properly trained, equipped, and organized.

An important point that impressed me during my command of WACs was that when women worked together or were isolated, so to speak, there was greater efficiency. As soon as the boy-girl relationships came into play, there were an almost instant shift to role playing. Suddenly there was more attention to appearance and less to the job. I believe that this sexual awareness cannot be disregarded merely by saying, “See, now you’re all equal.” The fact of the matter is that, even if we were equal, we would still not be alike—and for that I am grateful.

In a combat situation, where teamwork is so important, the fewer the complexities in interpersonal relations, the better.

We hear the complaint that women must be allowed to serve in combat roles so the top echelons of command will be available to them. This is a specious argument. General Eisenhower never heard a shot fired in anger prior to World War II, and there are many other high-ranking officers who are in the same position. If the Army insists that women must serve in combat to attain high rank, then the selection process intended needed to be a logistics or strategic planner are different than those needed to engage in combat. The higher the rank, the more far-fetched is a combat requirement.

We also hear the statement made that members of the Army Nurse Corps served in the front lines and, therefore, it should not be world-shaking if women became infantry rifle-persons. The comparison, of course, is a poor one. Nurses surely have been subjected to small arms fire, but the fulfillment of their mission of aiding medical doctors is meant to be undertaken in an area protected from enemy fire. Furthermore, a nurse, like a doctor, is designated as a noncombatant. As such, she is not normally subjected to the intense exposure to the enemy that close combat units are, and has certain privileges under the Geneva Convention.

My more specific objections against the concept of women in combat are:

It conspicuously disregards our culture. While I was in the European Theater, when a crisis arose, the men instinctively became protective of the women. Despite a deliberate program of feminization now being inflicted on women recruits, under combat conditions an instinct as old as mankind will not change. The experience of the Israeli Army bears this out. During the Arab-Israeli War, the men reacted with extreme shock at seeing women’s bodies mutilated, much more so than seeing men injured. The Israelis have, of course, always abandoned the folly of utilizing women in positions requiring close contact with the enemy.

Next, women bear children. Should the United States adopt the questionable policy of the utilization of women in combat and close support role, it will be alone among major nations. The concept of presumed total equality between men and women was initiated by the Soviet Union in the time of Lenin. Though Soviet women, because of the shortage of men, aided in the defense of their country in the front lines during the Second World War, the present front line Russian infantry units, I am told, are all male, despite over 60 years of presumed equality.

In the event of war against our most likely enemy, it is fair to assume the enemy infantry will be men. If captured in the jungle of close combat, the combat or combat-support woman soldier might well be exposed to all sorts of indignities by men who have been denied female companionship for a long period. I wonder also with how much common decency an enemy will deal with captured women prisoners.

As a matter of fact, large numbers of security personnel were needed on Omaha Beach to protect the women I commanded, not from the enemy, but from our own men.

The sexual act obviously can have a much more lasting effect on women than on men. For this reason, and because women are generally weaker than men, they have a right to expect extra protection. This is denied a woman in combat operations.

Finally, there would be serious complications in human relations. We cannot compare the life-and-death situation of front line combat with the commingling of the sexes in the rear echelon, especially with the low proportion of female to male that will exist on the front lines. Relationships will be formed that could complicate daily operations. We must remember we will be dealing with men and women who have been separated from their spouses for long periods of time.

Impartial leadership and the equitable sharing of dangers are necessary to success in combat. These qualities could be endangered. A penalty in the rear area is one thing; the loss of life that could result in the front lines is another.

It is an accepted principle that male bonding is important in warfare. Soldiers don’t fight for their country; they fight for one another, for mom, apple pie, and the girl back home. To deprive the military services of the simple expedient of treating the sexes differently flies in the face of common sense.

In conclusion, the great 19th Century sociologist, de Tocqueville, whose writings today more vividly than ever reflect the strengths and weaknesses of our great land, supports my reasoning as follows—and I quote:

There are people * * * who confounding * * * the different characteristics of the sexes would make man and woman into beings not only equal but alike. They would give to both the same functions, impose on both the same duties * * * They would mix them in all things * * * It may readily be conceived that by thus attempting to make one sex equal to the other, both are degraded, and from so preposterous a medley of the works of nature nothing could ever result but weak men and disorderly women.

Thank you for your attention.
Mr. Edwards. Thank you all.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Lawlor follows:]

Mr. Chairman: Members of the Sub-Committee: 

I am Mary Lowler of Winnetka, Illinois. I served as a WAC lieutenant in the European Theater of Operations in World War II, landing in Normandy behind our American fighting men on D+90. My concern is with the bad effect ERA will have on national defense. Specifically, I have a strongly held view that women should not serve in combat positions in the U.S. Army, as ERA, according to generally accepted legal studies, would make them eligible to do.

In 1945 I enlisted in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (later the Women's Army Corps) on my twenty first birthday. At that time the recruiting pitch was "Join the WAC and release a man for combat."

Thirty years later, in 1975, I was shocked to learn that Congress had rejected specific proposals to amend the ERA to exempt women from the draft and from combat. Since then I have learned that there are many other flaws in ERA which I'm sure will be covered by other witnesses.

Today my aim is to convince the Sub-committee that ERA should be rejected because of its deleterious effect on the military. The Defense Department should not be forced to go to court to demonstrate that putting women in combat would interfere with national security; Congress should make that decision. I am convinced that those who take a contrary position are motivated by reasons other than that of improving our national security.

They seek to attain a type of so-called "equality" that is impractical, unrealistic, and would hurt both sexes if put into operation.

When I was on Omaha Beach during World War II, up to my knees in mud, there was no agitation among the women soldiers to be allowed to go into the front lines, nor, I'm sure, did anyone ever consider using American girls in combat despite the shortage of male replacements. Today I have listened hard, but I hear no chorus of voices from the female uniformed personnel within the Army demanding this type of service, nor do I detect a change in the attitude of the Department of Defense based on recent decisions on the utilization of women in the Army made by Assistant Secretary Korb in conjunction with the Department of the Army (as reported in the Washington Post on 10/18/83).

Because our form of government is vulnerable to concentrated pressure from special interests which do not always act in the common good, and because the Army is a disciplined organization, the Army becomes an ideal vehicle to be used by a small group, not representing a majority viewpoint, whose principal objective is social change.
Obviously the purpose of the Army is to fight, and not to force changes in our society, especially when such changes to not have universal acceptance.

While it may be argued that a woman has the right to serve in the Army wherever she is qualified, and ERA will give that right, we must remember that the vast majority of those in ground combat would still be male. Such men have a countervailing right to have women excluded. If they are not excluded unit effectiveness will suffer. Certainly American citizens sent to war should be able to expect from their government the right to serve in combat units that are properly trained, equipped and organized.

An important point that impressed me during my command of WAC’s was that when the women worked together or were isolated, so to speak, there was greater efficiency. As soon as the boy-girl relationship came into play there was an almost instant shift to role playing. Suddenly there was more attention to appearance and less to the job. I believe that this sexual awareness cannot be disregarded merely by saying—“nee, now you are all equal.” The fact of the matter is that even if we were equal we would still not be alike—and for that I am grateful.

In a combat situation where teamwork is so important the fewer the complexities in interpersonal relations, the better.

We hear the complaint that women must be allowed to serve in combat roles so the top echelons of command will be available to them. This is a specious argument. General Eisenhower never heard a shot fired in anger prior to World War II, and there are many other high ranking officers who are in the same position. If the Army insists that women must serve in combat to attain high rank, then the selection processes need revamping. The talents needed to be a logistics or strategic planner are different than those needed to engage in combat. The higher the rank, the more far fetched is a combat requirement.

We also hear the statement made that members of the Army Nurse Corps served in the front lines; therefore it should not be world shaking if women became infantry riflemen. The comparison, of course, is a poor one. Nurses surely have been subjected to small arms fire, but the fulfillment of their mission of aiding medical doctors is meant to be undertaken in an area protected from enemy fire. Furthermore, a nurse, like a doctor, is designated as a noncombatant. As such she is not normally subjected to the intense exposure to the enemy that close combat units are, and has certain privileges under the Geneva Convention.
My more specific objections against the concept of women in combat are:

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The experience of the Israeli army bears this out (as reported in the Chicago Tribune of 9/8/76). During the Arab-Israeli war the men reacted with extreme shock at seeing women's bodies mutilated, much more so than seeing men injured.

The Israelis, of course, abandoned the folly of utilizing women in positions requiring close contact with the enemy.

Next: Women bear children. Should the United States adopt the questionable policy of the utilization of women in combat and close combat support roles it will be alone among major nations. The concept of presumed total equality between men and women was initiated by the Soviet Union in the time of Lenin. Though Russian women, because of the shortage of men, aided in the defense of their country in the front lines during the second World War, the present front line Russian infantry units, I am told, are all male—despite over sixty years of presumed equality.

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