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**COMMANDER**  
**AMY R. ALCORN**

I hope the words I share here will provide insights to my experiences in the American Navy and our efforts and challenges with equality with women serving in our armed forces.

I joined the Navy back in 1982. I served on a ship, one of three that I served in my 31 years with the Navy. I was 17 years old when I joined. I had no college degree, so I enlisted. I became a junior sailor and earned increases in my rank by working very hard until I became an officer about 13 years later. With my father and mother as witnesses, I was promoted to the rank of Commander which is my most recent rank at this time. This happened 30 years to the day from when I first joined the Navy.

Back in 1982, when I joined, women who became pregnant had to be separated from the Navy. That was only because there were no support services for females to be women serving in the military as well as mothers. But later in the 1980s and 1990s, significant

progress in these efforts were made by adding day care, flexible work schedules, and other services to bases. Similarly, large corporations began adding support structures to their businesses so that women could be mothers as well as businesswomen in our culture. The Navy leadership has recognized the balancing act that mothers have to make while serving on active military duty. There are many sacrifices to be made. The Navy has recognized this struggle and now offers new mothers a sabbatical so they can spend up to a year uninterrupted time to be with their family. They return to the service and continue their career.

Although the armed forces are open to all those who wish to serve, still only a small percentage of women in society choose to serve in non-traditional roles. Today, women in our armed forces are measured on the merits of their work accomplishments. We are paid and given the same benefits as our male counterparts, but the bottom line is that serving in the military is still considered a non-traditional role for women. For each of those women who do choose to serve their militaries, the rewards are great. Each of us in this seminar take pride in representing women in our armed forces, defending our country. Our military leadership as well as our President recognizes the contributions that we bring to our country. We see ourselves as continuing to pave the way to equality in our profession through our professionalism and dedication to our service. Our president and our de-

fense leadership have recognized the contributions we have made and allowed women to serve in combat roles.

This ruling makes official some of the things women have already been doing. We have women pilots who are serving on aircraft carriers and flying missions over Afghanistan and Iraq. We have explosive ordnance disposal women, military police who are women working in Afghanistan to this day. Women have been doing these jobs for about 10 years, so I believe the decision to allow women to serve in combat for the armed services is very well founded based upon the 10 years of experience these women have already been doing.

Another recent achievement is the deployment of women on our submarines. The Navy never thought that women shouldn't serve on submarines; this was based solely on the way submarines are built. For women to serve on submarines, private quarters are required. However, the issue is that quarters for the enlisted personnel are built in a part of the submarine that one must transit through. In order to get from one part of the submarine to the other, one must go through berthing compartments, which is not suitable for the females. So what we have initiated is that women officers will serve on the submarines and will be given the benefit of a stateroom. I believe this an extremely welcome addition for women serving on submarines.

The best way to ensure greatest equality for women in our armed forces is for each of us to set the example of professionalism and maturity in our service. By making sound decisions combined with professional competence, women will continue to be recognized as equal parts of the chain of command in our services.

In closing, I have been in for 31 years, and as I approach my final years in the Navy my sole hope is that I have inspired women coming up through the ranks to consider a career in the armed forces. I am convinced that women will find a career in the military both challenging and rewarding as I have.