

Rent the Camo: Access to Maternity Wear Act

Congresswoman Deb Haaland (NM-01)

The problem.

Pregnant Servicemembers do not have access to readily available maternity uniforms and related items. Consequently, this high demand and low supply environment drives up the cost of maternity uniforms, which is especially challenging given that these uniforms may only need to be worn for a few months or handful of times. While some Services provide enlisted pregnant women a small allowance for maternity uniforms, the Servicemembers are still left paying a large overhead and the lack of uniforms available for purchase remains an issue.

In addition, the uniforms that are available contain permethrin, an insect repellent which has been identified as a Section 3 hazard, which may induce neurotoxic symptoms including diarrhea, salivation, tremors, convulsions and hyperactivity to sound or touch. When a Servicemember attempts to order a permethrin free uniform, it usually takes well over 12 weeks to arrive. During this waiting period, the expectant mother is often still too small to transition to maternity uniforms, thus she continues to wear her permethrin treated uniform, potentially exposing her fetus to this chemical. Likewise, post-partum women have raised concerns about passing permethrin to their baby through breast milk.

The solution.

The Rent the Camo Act directs the Secretary of Defense, along with the Director of the Defense Logistics Agency, to create a pilot program that issues maternity uniforms and maternity related uniforms to pregnant military members at no cost to the Servicemember. Once the uniform is no longer needed, it will be returned post-partum, promoting sustainability and ensuring women have access to properly fitted maternity uniforms in a timely manner. This bill also demands permethrin-free uniforms be quickly issued to newly pregnant and post-partum women.

Background

Early this year, Rep. Haaland heard from several military women around the country, to include Service women in our district. After doing some additional research, she heard from hundreds more female Servicemembers who shared their stories of frustration and struggle in attempting to single-handedly get access to maternity wear and uniforms. Most pregnant Servicemembers require various maternity uniforms to execute their duties. For example, in the Navy, pregnant women must often buy the maternity Service Dress Blue, Summer White, Service Khaki, Dress Uniforms and Working Uniforms. Defense Advisory Committee on Women In the Services (DACOWITS) is one of the oldest DOD federal advisory committees. DACOWITS has urged the Secretary of Defense to address the availability, affordability and functionality of maternity uniforms since 2016, and again in their latest [2019 report](#).

Currently, pregnant Servicemembers go on social media platforms like Facebook to swap and sell maternity uniforms. If this is not an option, they may travel distances to find a portion of their uniform in one location and other portions of their uniforms in several other locations before they have a complete maternity uniform. Female aviators do not have a maternity flight suit. Thus, they buy raw sewing materials to manipulate and add a belly band to their flight suits.

Rent the Camo: Access to Maternity Wear specifically:

- Directs the Director of the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA), in coordination with the Secretaries concerned, to carry out a pilot program under which each Secretary concerned will establish an office for issuing maternity-related uniform items to pregnant members of the Armed Forces on a temporary basis and at no cost to the member.
- Ensures there is a healthy stock-level of maternity-related uniform items, including service uniforms, utility uniforms, and other items relating to command and duty assignment.
- Demands that maternity uniforms are not treated with the chemical permethrin.
- Gives Secretaries and Directors the flexibility to execute the pilot program based on their unique individual Service needs to include timelines, number of items being issued, and development of further guidance, etc.
- Requires inspection, processing, repairing, cleaning and re-stocking returned items before re-issuance.
- Requires the Director of DLA, in coordination with the Secretaries, to submit a report to the Congressional defense committees including an overview of the costs associated with, and any savings realized by, the pilot program including a comparison of the cost of maintaining a stock of maternity-related uniform item for issuance, recommendations on continuance of the program, whether legislation is needed to extend the program, and any other matters the Secretary of Defense deems appropriate by Sept 30, 2025.
- Provides \$10,000,000 to implement the pilot program.