

PROTECT OUR DEFENDERS 2014 (2nd QUARTER) MEDIA REPORT

Protect Our Defenders (POD) continues to be the leading voice for victims of rape and sexual assault in the military. Our organization has also directly [influenced policy recommendations](#) passed earlier this year in Congress to help survivors, and ensure that our active duty service members are given access to a justice system equal to the one they protect.

We continue to work with survivors through our [Pro-Bono Legal Network Program, which celebrates its 1-year anniversary this month](#). Our [Peer-to-Peer Support program](#) remains active, connecting survivors to those who can offer emotional support and information.

POD and our members have been featured in more than 700 articles and broadcast stories. These include pieces in all the major newspaper and television broadcast outlets. The issue has also made its way out of news cycle and into pop culture.

The epidemic of military sexual assault was a [running storyline](#) in the acclaimed series *House of Cards*. The series included an incident ripped straight from the headlines, where, Robin Wright's character, Claire Underwood quotes a military brochure on sexual assault prevention that advises victims to submit to an attack rather than resist. Less than a year before, Protect Our Defenders [broke the real life story](#) of a brochure at Shaw Air Force Base, S.C. that recommended submitting to an attack. The issue of sexual assault in the military was even [featured in a sketch](#) by comedian Amy Schumer.

Below are highlights and prominent stories that POD has been involved with over the past few months. To see all the work POD has accomplished in 2014, you can also look back at our [2014 1st Quarter Media Report](#).

Congress Adopts Provisions Proposed by Protect Our Defenders

On May 22, the House of Representatives passed their version of the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2015. The bill included several provisions [proposed by Protect Our Defenders](#), who worked closely in formulating critical improvements with Congresswomen Jackie Speier (D-CA), who sponsored the amendments.



These amendments included:

- Limiting the “Good Military Character” defense to military-specific crimes, so that an accused rapist can no longer be found “not guilty” simply for being a good soldier;
- Guaranteeing victims the right to appeal rulings regarding therapist-patient privilege;
- And closing the loophole that military judges use to justify turning over victims’ confidential therapy records to their alleged rapist.

While POD [sees these reforms as a supplement, not a substitute](#) for true, fundamental reform, we are calling on the Senate to pass these reforms and sign them into law.

2014 Pentagon Report on Sexual Assault in the Military

In early May 2014, the Department of Defense (DoD) [released](#) their annual report on sexual assault in the military, which highlighted the need for fundamental reform, transparency, and accountability. According to the annual survey, reports of rape and sexual assault increased over 50%—from 3,374 total reports, with 2,558 unrestricted and 816 restricted, in 2012 to 5,061 total reports last year, with 3,768 unrestricted and 1,293 restricted. Based on earlier reports, we also know that over 50% of victims report the perpetrator was of higher rank and at least 23% of victims report the perpetrator was in their chain of command.

Media outlets relied on POD for comments and analysis in order to make sense of this new information coming out of the Pentagon. Along with releasing a [statement](#), President Nancy Parrish’s comments were featured in articles from the [Washington Post](#), [Bloomberg News](#), [Reuters](#) and many others.



POD Advisory Board Member and regular CNN contributor BriGette McCoy also [wrote an op-ed](#) that was featured in The Guardian the day after the report was released. And NBC News [interviewed Brian Lewis](#), another POD Advisory Board Member for a story about the increase in numbers coming from the new report.



Petition Calling on President Obama to Rescind Executive Order

On June 13, 2014, President Obama signed an Executive Order, proposed by the Pentagon undermining essential “rape shield” protections for sexual assault victims in

the military. This order severely weakens victims' privacy rights, and delivers a substantial blow to ongoing efforts by those who have been working tirelessly to reform the military justice system.

In response, POD worked with Tailhook whistleblower Paula Coughlin, a Protect Our Defenders' Executive Board Member to create a [petition on Causes.com](#), calling on the President to rescind the portions of the Executive Order that undermine basic privacy protections for victims of sexual assault in the military. In less than one week the petition **received over 4,000 signatures**.



To promote the petition Nancy Parrish [wrote a blog](#) that was featured by the Huffington Post, while other advocates and influencers also joined with POD to spread the word. Arianna Huffington [retweeted Nancy's blog post](#) to her 1.5 million Twitter followers. Causes.com and the Invisible War [shared the petition](#) on their social networks, and POD promoted the petition through our social networks as well.

In response to the President's action, Congresswoman Jackie Speier (D-CA) offered an amendment, approved by the House, which prohibits funding to implement the offending portion of the Executive Order. Rep Speier's office subsequently quoted POD President Nancy Parrish in a [press release](#) announcing the amendment's approval.

Social Media

Through Facebook, Twitter and Causes.com, POD continues to organize and communicate with our large survivor network.

POD has **over 14,000 users following us on Facebook**, with 10,000 new followers in just the past 6 months. POD has **over 1,500 followers on Twitter**. We also have **nearly 19,000 supporters on Causes.com**, the world's largest online campaigning platform. POD uses all of our social networks to engage with survivors, media outlets, reporters, elected leaders and other advocacy organizations. POD [has also been mentioned](#) alongside other high profile non-profit organizations by SalsaLabs, one of the premiere

online platforms for advocacy groups. And POD has over 20,000 subscribers to our email news updates.

In the coming months, we will work with our survivor community to launch a full-scale campaign targeting elected officials and will elevate our call for fundamental reform to our broken military justice system.