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# McCain: 'No Reason to Force' Transgender Service Members 'to Leave Military'

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WEDNESDAY, JULY 26, 2017 AT 4:30 P.M.



*Miriam Wasser*

**Senator John McCain criticized President Donald Trump's Wednesday morning tweets stating the military would not "accept or allow" transgender people to serve in the military.**

In a **statement**, the Republican Senate Armed Services Committee chairman and one of the nation's most famous prisoners of war called the tweets aiming to reinstate the U.S. ban on

transgender people serving in the military "unclear."

"There is no reason to force service members who are able to fight, train, and deploy to leave the military –regardless of their gender identity," McCain's statement read.

McCain said policy decisions would not be made by his committee until a Department of Defense study looking into medical costs and military readiness of transgender individuals had been completed and "thoroughly reviewed by the Secretary of Defense, our military leadership, and the Congress."

McCain was one of multiple members of Congress, including Iowa veteran and **Republican Senator Joni Ernst**, to push back against Trump's indication that transgender individuals would be barred from serving "in any capacity" in the U.S. military.

The Arizona senator couldn't help throwing shade at the President's platform of choice: Twitter.

"The president's tweet this morning regarding transgender Americans in the military is yet another example of why major policy announcements should not be made via Twitter," the statement read.

Meanwhile, LGBTQ groups around Arizona thought the president's tweets were more than just a little "unclear."

Phoenix Pride, an LGBTQ advocacy group, put out a statement Wednesday afternoon condemning Trump's tweets.

"President Donald Trump's tweet this morning proposing an all-out ban on transgender individuals serving 'in any capacity in the U.S. Military' is misguided, hateful and founded on a false premise that will only serve to increase hatred and intolerance toward transgender men and women," the statement read.

Phoenix Pride spokesperson Jeremy Helfgot said he didn't know whether the tweets would incite an actual policy change but said Trump's sentiment created a stigma whether it enacted change.

"It's difficult to know if this is actually going to have any impact other than the terrible stigma it immediately assigns to those [transgender] individuals," Helfgot told the *Phoenix New Times*. "To single them out and say they're not fit to serve is completely offensive and frankly just wrong."

Trans Queer Pueblo, an LGBTQ organization working to provide support for the LGBTQ migrant community of color, shared a post from a Facebook user who had some choice words for the president.

"As commander-in-chief, the military are, technically, his employees, and I suppose he just wants to know for sure that, if he walks up to grab a pu\*\*y, that's what he finds there," the Facebook post sharing a *New York Times* story about the tweets read.

According to a [2016 RAND Corporation study](#), of the 1.3 million active-duty members of the military, about 2,450 are transgender, though the study acknowledged it's difficult to estimate the number of transgender personnel in the military "due to current policies and a lack of empirical data."

In 2015, Arizona opened the nation's fourth trans-focused VA health clinic in Tuscon.

The Department of Veterans Affairs Press Secretary, Curt Cashour, said the VA policy has not changed, despite Trump's tweets.

"We provide care, benefits, and other VA services to all veterans, including transgender veterans," Cashour said in an email statement.

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