

House Committee Strips Controversial Provision From Defense Bill

Women won't be eligible for the draft anytime soon—not if the Republican leadership in the U.S. House of Representatives has anything to say about it.

Late Monday night, the House Rules Committee stripped a provision narrowly adopted by the House Armed Services Committee that added women to the Selective Service requirements. The measure, which was meant to be a protest of the Obama administration's decision to place women in front-line combat roles, backfired when several Republicans—most of them combat veterans—approved it in committee.

The rest of the House GOP was deeply divided over the issue, and the provision was expected to consume much of the scheduled debate time on the full bill later this week. Speaker of the House Paul Ryan is likely going to get most of the credit—or blame, depending on one's view on the issue—for the procedural move.

U.S. Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-Calif.), who originally offered the protest measure, has been silent since the committee vote. But the committee's ranking Democrat, Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.), called it a “dead of night” act of cowardice and a tactic that voters “will see through.”

The issue is far from dead, though. The Senate's version of the National Defense Authorization Act includes the women's Selective Service requirement. If it is approved by the full Senate, the matter would have to be part of the compromise negotiations between the two chambers called “reconciliation.”

President Obama has threatened to veto the House version of

the NDAA already, saying he is disappointed over funding issues and restrictions on transferring prisoners out of the detention facilities at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station, Cuba. Congress isn't expect to have a finalized defense act ready until later this summer.