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Trump's military ban is 'disheartening,' says Lancaster County transgender advocate



SAM JANESCH | Staff Writer Jul 28, 2017



A supporter of LGBT rights holds up an "equality flag" on Capitol Hill in Washington, Wednesday, July 26, 2017, during an event held by Rep. Joe Kennedy, D-Mass. in support of transgender members of the, in response to President Donald Trump's declaration that he wants transgender people barred from serving in the U.S. military "in any capacity," citing "tremendous medical costs and disruption." (AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin)

Jacquelyn Martin

As a retired master sergeant in the U.S. Air Force who is also transgender, **Joanne Carroll** is "angered" and "disheartened" by President Donald Trump's decision to ban transgender individuals from serving in military.

“It’s kind of ridiculous because one day we tell people now you’re worth something, your service is valued — and all of a sudden you say our service isn’t valued, you aren’t worth anything,” said Carroll, a Lancaster resident who transitioned to female in 2001 at the age of 60.

Carroll spent 20 years in active duty, undertaking a pair of overseas tours in Athens, Greece, and in Southeast Asia during the height of the Vietnam War.

And while she looks back fondly on the camaraderie of those she served with, she says the “underlying theme the whole time” was a struggle with gender identity.

It’s a struggle, she says, many current and retired servicemembers are going through — and one that is compounded with Trump’s decision Wednesday.

In a tweet, Trump said the armed forces “cannot be burdened with the tremendous medical costs and disruption that transgender in the military would entail.”

Members of the LGBTQ community and others reacted strongly against Trump’s statement. And there will be no immediate changes to military policy that currently allow transgender individuals to serve, according to reports on memos from the Joint Chiefs.

“What’s disheartening is all through his campaign, including in his acceptance speech at the (Republican National Convention), is he said he’d be the best friend the LGBT community has ever had,” said Carroll, who is president of the advocacy group TransCentralPA. She also served as a local Hillary Clinton delegate to the Democratic National Convention last year.



In this 2016 file photo, Joanne Carroll, president of TransCentralPA, poses for a portrait at her church, the First Reformed United Church of Christ, in Lancaster.

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Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle voiced a variety of opinions on the issue.

U.S. Rep. Pat Meehan, a Republican who represents parts of eastern Lancaster County with the 7th Congressional District, said in a statement transgender people should be able to serve but the military should not pay for gender reassignment surgery.

"We should not deprive these individuals of the opportunity to serve their country, nor should we deprive the country of their talents and dedication."

Meehan also questioned the president's motives.

"We should not deprive these individuals of the opportunity to serve their country, nor should we deprive the country of their talents and dedication," Meehan said. "I hope this decision was truly made with the military's needs in mind rather than political considerations."



LGBT outrage over Trump ban on transgender military service

There are roughly 1,300 to 6,600 active transgender service members out of 1.3 million active-duty troops, according to a 2016 study by the nonprofit RAND Corporation. The Pentagon has not released data on the number of transgender people currently serving.

The same study found that gender transition-related health care coverage would be \$2.4 million to \$8.4 million annually.

Republican U.S. Rep. Lloyd Smucker, who represents most of Lancaster County with the 16th District, agrees with the statement Thursday from the Joint Chiefs, Smucker's spokesman Bill Jaffee wrote in an email.

Smucker "agrees ... that all military personnel should be treated with respect and continue focusing on their assigned missions," Jaffee wrote.

"When the White House clarifies the policy, Rep. Smucker will again look to the experts, like General Dunford and Secretary Mattis, for guidance as they have distinguished records in building an effective and cohesive military," he wrote.



Trump's transgender troops ban divides veterans in Congress