

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 30, 2014

The Honorable Chuck Hagel
Secretary
U.S. Department of Defense
1400 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1400

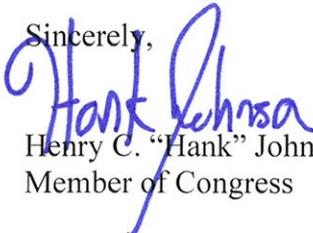
Dear Secretary Hagel,

We are writing with deep concern about the United States Army's updated regulation, AR 670-1. This regulation unnecessarily discriminates against African American and other minority women. While we appreciate that the intent of the regulation is to ensure uniformity in our military, we believe that the impact of this discriminatory policy will be to lower morale and make it more difficult for all Americans to proudly serve their country. We appreciate your recent direction to the Deputy Secretary of Defense to review this matter with the Service Secretaries and Military Chiefs. While we await the outcome of the review, we urge the Department to reconsider this regulation, and to include affected populations in the development of any new grooming standards.

The regulation prohibits dreadlocks "against the scalp or free-hanging" and "unkempt" or "matted" braids and cornrows. Though the policy applies to all soldiers, the use of these words furthers an offensive and biased perception that ethnic hair that is "natural", or not straightened with heat or chemicals, is somehow unruly, and must be carefully regulated. While it is reasonable for the Department to expect some degree of conformity and neatness in hairstyles, those expectations must take into account the diversity and history of our country, and the variety of natural hair textures.

For these reasons, we strongly encourage you to reconsider the updated regulation. All Americans must feel welcome in the Armed Forces. This updated regulation is offensive, biased, and divisive to thousands of our service members. In a time when budget cuts mean that the Armed Forces must do more with less, Department officials should look for ways to increase morale and unity as opposed to unnecessary and divisive policies that distract from the core mission of protecting our freedom and our country.

Sincerely,


Henry C. "Hank" Johnson
Member of Congress

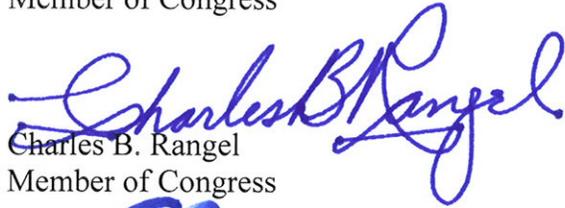

Madeleine Z. Bordallo
Member of Congress



Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



Bobby Rush
Member of Congress



Charles B. Rangel
Member of Congress



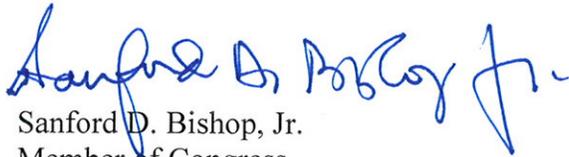
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André Carson
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Marc Veasey
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Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
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