

e-Edition Plus

A current events feature for teaching with electronic editions.

By Emilia Pastina

In a first for U.S. Navy, women to serve on subs

Every year in every kind of career, women achieve success when given new opportunities.

And shortly, women will be getting a new opportunity in the U.S. military.

The Department of the Navy will soon allow females to serve on submarines — something that has never been allowed in the history of the U.S. Navy.

In mid-February, U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates let lawmakers in the U.S. Congress know the Navy wished to change its all-male submarine policy to allow women to serve aboard the underwater vessels.

Congress had until the end of April to stop the process but chose to let the change go forward.

The first women to serve on the submarines will all be officers. They will begin the 15-month training process this summer and report to duty aboard the submarines by 2012.

Currently, there are about 52,446 females actively serving in the Navy — about 15 percent of the Navy's 330,700 total personnel. Officials say that allowing women to serve aboard the submarines allows the Navy to recruit from an even larger "talent pool."

"Today, women earn about half of all science and engineering bachelor's degrees," said Vice Admiral John J. Donnelly, commander of the Navy's submarine fleet, in a news release. "There are capable women who have the interest, talent and desire to succeed in the submarine force."

"Maintaining the best submarine force in the world requires us to recruit from the largest possible talent pool."

Opening doors

Since 1994 women in the Navy have been allowed to serve on surface ships. But the tight quarters and lack of privacy kept females from being allowed to serve aboard submarines.

The first women to serve on war-fighting vessels will be assigned to guided-missile-attack and ballistic-missile submarines, which have the greatest living space in the Navy's submarine fleet.

"We have created a well-thought-out plan to phase in the female officers to ... submarine crews," said Donnelly. "Enabling these bright and talented female officers to serve will be a great asset to ... the strength of our military."

Earning opportunities

Like the men serving aboard submarines, the women are required to have a technically-based education with calculus and physics knowledge.

The 15-month submarine officer training will include nuclear power school and the Submarine Officer Basic Course.

There will be three females in eight different crews assigned to two subs on the East Coast and two subs on the West Coast.

"There are extremely capable women in the Navy who have the talent and desire to succeed in the submarine force," Navy Secretary Ray Mabus said in a news release.

"Enabling them to serve in the submarine community is best for the submarine force and our Navy. We literally could not run the Navy without women today."

With the changes in Navy policy and ongoing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, many may wonder if ground combat is next for women in the military.

Photo by Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Torrey W. Lee



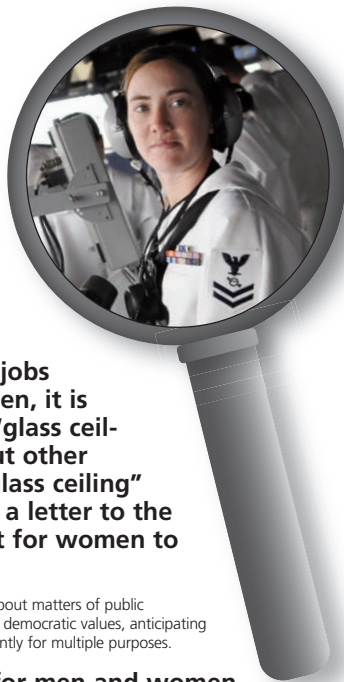
Since 1994, women like Petty Officer 2nd Class Debra Snide have been allowed to serve on surface ships for the U.S. Navy. Soon women will be serving on Navy submarines as well.

Talk About the News

- There are many reasons new doors have opened to women in the U.S. military, including high levels of education among women, lack of a draft and ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. As a class, talk about the roles women play in the armed forces. How are the challenges women face different from those of men? Should women have different roles and rules than men? Should women be allowed to serve aboard submarines? Should they be able to serve in ground combat?

Learning Standard: Engaging peers in constructive conversation about matters of public concern by clarifying issues, considering opposing views, applying democratic values, anticipating consequences and working toward making decisions.

Explore Your e-Edition



- When women gain opportunities in jobs that were previously held only by men, it is said they have broken through the “glass ceiling” of a career. As a class, talk about other fields in which women still face a “glass ceiling” of opportunities. Pick one and write a letter to the editor describing why it is important for women to break through.
- Tight living spaces make it difficult for men and women to share the same quarters on submarines. As a class, discuss the kind of character and personality sailors and officers will need to deal successfully with the situation. Write an e-Edition editorial suggesting things the Navy could do to ensure a smooth transition.

Learning Standard: Engaging peers in constructive conversation about matters of public concern by clarifying issues, considering opposing views, applying democratic values, anticipating consequences and working toward making decisions; writing fluently for multiple purposes.

Learning Standards: Identifying and explaining how individuals in history demonstrate good character and personal virtue; writing fluently for multiple purposes to produce compositions, such as stories, poetry, journals, personal narratives, editorials, research reports, persuasive essays, resumes and memos.

- According to the story, about half of all science and engineering bachelor's degrees are earned by women. Read today's e-Edition employment classifieds and circle or highlight every job that requires science and/or math. Choose one career and research it on the Internet to find out the education, skills and experience needed. Write a paragraph describing the ideal candidate for this job.

Learning Standards: Acquiring information from multiple sources and then organizing and analyzing it; responding analytically and critically to a variety of written, visual, oral and electronic texts.

How Well Did You Read?

Understanding what you read is a skill that will help you all through life. Review the story about women and the U.S. Navy by answering the questions below.

1. According to the story, who could have stopped women from serving aboard submarines:
A. Army officials
B. Air Force officials
C. Marine officials
D. U.S. Congress
2. According to the story, women currently make up what percentage of active Navy personnel:
A. 5
B. 10
C. 15
D. 20
3. According to the story, about what fraction of women earn all science and engineering bachelor's degrees:
A. Three-quarters
B. One-half
C. One-third
D. One-quarter
4. According to the story, why were the specific submarines chosen as the first for women to serve aboard:
A. More living space
B. Safer vessels
C. Newest subs
D. All of the above
5. According to the story, how long is Navy submarine training:
A. 12 months
B. 15 months
C. 18 months
D. 20 months