



Remarks of Terri Odom, Advocacy Board Member
Press Conference - January 23, 2013

Hello and welcome; my name is Terri Odom. I became an active member of Protect Our Defenders because the military leadership, my chain of command and our government failed me. I am a veteran and a survivor of military sexual assault. I would like to acknowledge the survivor community here today, along with the members of our Advisory and Advocacy Boards.

Protect Our Defenders is a place for survivors to build community, amplify our voices, help one another through our peer support and other programs and take collective action.

I stand here surrounded by some of the most courageous people I have ever known. POD is unique in that we are survivor driven. For me personally; POD is what some refer to as "A Game Changer." When I first shared my story of my rape and torture while serving in the US Navy, I was broken. I felt as though I had no path, nor purpose. But I am back! I am once again serving my country...Protect Our Defenders gave me support, vision and (Me) back!

Ten months ago I was humbled to be appointed by The St Louis VAMC Director to start up a Pilot Program at our local VAMC to help implement an MST program and to assist all of our veteran population to work with our staff. I never quit on the military! They quit on me! But thanks to some amazing people and POD, I am not just breathing! But Living.

We are here today because 5 months ago, Navy veteran Paula Coughlin stepped forward and led our effort to demand congress investigate the largest military sexual abuse scandal in our nation's history at Lackland Air Force Base. It's my honor to introduce her here today – Paula Coughlin.