

Despite Trump's ban, NM National Guard looks to keep transgender troops

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ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — A spokesperson for Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham said transgender troops will be able to join and serve in the state's National Guard despite President Donald Trump's push to ban them from the military.

Under a new Trump administration policy, transgender recruits are prevented from joining the armed forces unless they serve as the gender they were assigned at birth.

Among other things, the policy restricts how current transgender troops serve by forcing them to meet the standards required for their birth sex.

"We are not going to discharge any transgender individual from serving in our state National Guard, nor would this state ever discriminate against someone based on their gender identity," said Tripp Stelnicki, the governor's communications director.

Unlike other branches of the military, National Guard groups are controlled by the state government – not Trump.

"The capacity to do the job effectively is the first and only consideration New Mexico will make in determining who serves in its National Guard," added Stelnicki.

Those in favor of Trump's new policy claim it protects unit cohesion and troop readiness.

Those against it argue that transgender troops are ready to serve like other military members.

The Department of Defense said the new policy doesn't affect transgender troops currently serving in the armed forces if they've already transitioned or if they remain in their "biological sex."

However, the new policy bars future applicants who've been diagnosed with gender dysphoria.

According to the American Psychiatric Association, gender dysphoria involves a conflict between a person's physical or assigned gender and the gender with which he/she/they identify.

Advocates argue the military is better served when troops can be themselves.

"If you can serve as your authentic self, you will actually serve much better," said Stephanie Patten, a transgender veteran that served in the Navy.

Patten works with the group American Veterans for Equal Rights and said Trump's ban is an attack on every group – not just the transgender community.

"In fighting for true equality in this country, we fight for everyone's equality because it's a cascading effect," said Patten.

New Mexico is the only state besides California to voice opposition to Trump's transgender ban.

"The Transgender Resource Center of New Mexico is delighted to see California standing behind its transgender National Guard soldiers," said Adrien Lawyer, co-founder of Albuquerque's Transgender Resource Center.

“This is a bold move that shows a great deal of integrity.” Lawyer added.

“Here in New Mexico we are so fortunate to have leaders like Governor Lujan Grisham. Our governor has been outspoken in her support for all transgender people throughout New Mexico and is now backing our transgender National Guard members as well. She is someone our community can count on and we are proud to have her represent our state. “