

Military closing gender gap in fitness requirements

WASHINGTON (AP) — When the drill sergeant yells, "Drop and give me 20!" women as well as men are expected to respond. But in most of the services, women do not have to do as many.

Updated fitness requirements have closed the gender gap, though not all the way.

Gone are the days when female Marines ran 1.5 miles while their male counterparts ran twice as far. As of this month, all Marines run three miles. Women can run a slightly slower time and still rate a perfect score.

Before the new rules took effect, women in the Marine Corps had to do 50 sit-ups in two minutes as part of their standard fitness test. Now they do 80, as do the men.

"I'm glad we're getting more on equal terms. It's long overdue," said Gunnery Sgt. Karen Imhoff, an 18-year veteran of the Corps. "The transition wasn't difficult at all because I'd always done more than what the minimum requirements were for us."

The Army likewise has closed the gap on sit-ups, and all soldiers run two miles. Female soldiers, however, can run a slower time and can do fewer push-ups than the men and still pass. The Navy's rules are similar.

The Air Force administers a stationary cycle stress test, with some differences in severity based on gender.

At a time when women make up only 13.2 percent of the active-duty force — up slightly from 11 percent in 1990 — and recruiters encounter difficulty attracting women into the military, officers explain the equalized fitness rules as a morale booster.

Marine Corps Gen. Charles Krulak, the service's top officer, started the move toward equalized fitness rules two years ago.

"What signal do we send to the Corps when at the end of a mile and a half, all the women drop off to the side and the men keep running?" Krulak said.

Not everyone is satisfied with the results.

When Army drill sergeants at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md., were accused of widespread consensual and nonconsensual sex with subordinates, James Webb, former Navy secretary and a Marine twice wounded in Vietnam, took a different view. He suggested the problem may stem from forcing young men and women together in units that depend on equality in discipline, recognition and exposure to danger.

"When double standards are introduced in matters of physical

training and performance, they work against these very criteria," Webb wrote.

Three female Marine sergeants said in an interview that grumbling from men about lighter fitness requirements for women occurs only when women do only the bare minimum of what is required. In most cases, they say, women do more.

"Women would always try to keep up with the men in the run," said Gunnery Sgt. Melissa Crane. "Then when we would finish the run we would always try to do as many sit-ups."

The Marines still make a concession on upper body strength, recognizing basic physiological differences between the male and female body. Thus women do a "flexed arm hang" — hanging from an overhead bar with arms bent — while the men do between three and 20 pull-ups. Failure in any of the three exercise categories — running, sit-ups and pull-ups — means a failing overall grade.

"It's a burner," said Maj. Leon Pappa, head of ground training at the U.S. Marine Corps base at Quantico, Va. "We no longer have a male or female sit-up. We have a Marine Corps sit-up test. The run is the same."

Combat and specialty training, as opposed to fitness testing, is the

same regardless of gender.

In the Army, a male soldier in the 17-21 age group must do between 42 and 82 push-ups, 52 and 92 sit-ups, and run two miles in no more than 15:54. A female in the same age group must do between 18 and 58 push-ups, 50 and 90 sit-ups, and the two-mile run in no more than 18:54.

"There are physiological differences that are taken into account. Women will never be able to do as many push-ups as males do," said Frank Palkoska, chief of doctrine at the Army physical fitness center at Fort Benning, Ga.

On the other hand, the Army has toughened the sit-up requirements for women after its fitness experts concluded that the typically lighter upper body weight of women made this exercise easier for them than for men.

The problem the Army notices is not an inability of women to pass fitness tests but poor overall results for all its young recruits.

"They have the highest failure rate," Palkoska said of the youngest soldiers. Societal changes, the growing ranks of couch potatoes, are contributing factors. "Most have never had the opportunity to go out and basically sweat. They've never run more than a quarter mile in their life."

Military fitness

Over the years, fitness requirements for male and female members of the military have become more similar. Service members must pass a test once or twice a year.

Army

- (17-21 age group)
- Two minutes of push-ups
 - Men 42 minimum, 82 for perfect score.
 - Women 18 minimum, 58 for perfect score.
- Two minutes of sit-ups
 - Men 52 minimum, 92 for perfect score.
 - Women 50 minimum, 90 for perfect score.
- Two-mile run
 - Men 15:54 maximum time, 11:54 for perfect score.
 - Women 18:54 maximum, 14:54 for perfect score.

Marine Corps

- Two minutes of sit-ups
 - Men 40 minimum, 80 for perfect score.
 - Women 40 minimum, 80 for perfect score.
- Pull-ups, no time limit
 - Men 3 minimum, 20 for maximum score.
 - Women Flexed arm hang 16 seconds minimum, 70 seconds for perfect score.
- 3-mile run
 - Men 28 minutes maximum, 18 minutes for perfect score.
 - Women 31 minutes maximum, 21 minutes for perfect score.

Navy

- (20-29 age group)
- Two minutes of push-ups
 - Men at least 29
 - Women at least 11
- Two minutes of sit-ups
 - Men at least 40
 - Women at least 33
- 1.5-mile run
 - Men 13:45 maximum time.
 - Women 16:45 maximum time.

Source: The Pentagon

Air Force

The Air Force imposes a cycle stress test involving a two-minute warm-up and minutes of pedaling against varying resistance. Severity of test differs with age and gender. Technicians measure heart rate, oxygen consumption and other factors to determine fitness.

The Navy also imposes weight and body fat requirements that differ with age, gender and height. Sailors can substitute a timed run.

Bush expresses commitment to education in address

▶ The Texas governor delivered his second State of the State speech to the Texas Legislature on Tuesday.

AUSTIN (AP) — Here is the partial text of the State of the State address Gov. George W. Bush delivered Tuesday to the Texas Legislature:

This moment feels far different than it did two years ago. As I entered this historic chamber for my first State of the State speech, I wasn't quite sure what to expect. In hindsight, I'll admit I was nervous. I was the brand new Governor, a rookie in a different ballpark.

Today, I come knowing I am among friends, many close friends, who are led by Lt. Governor Bob Bullock and House Speaker Pete Laney. I know you share my respect for these two Texas leaders. It has been an honor to work with them. I have learned much from them. We share a love for this great state, a deep desire to do

what is right for the people of Texas.

Two years ago, you and I found common ground for decisions based on a shared philosophy that our government should be limited — it should do a few things and do them well. We know that local people make the best decisions for their local communities and schools, and we know that Texans can run Texas. We agree that all our laws should support strong families, and that laws approved in this great chamber should say to each and every Texan: you are responsible for what you do.

We face no immediate legal or fiscal crisis. The state of our great state is healthy and vibrant. Our economy is diverse and it is growing. Our businesses are creating new jobs for our citizens. Fewer Texans are on welfare, more are at work. Those who commit crimes face tough laws, and we have jail beds waiting for them. Our government today is more effective and more efficient. Our state employees are dedicated and hard working. And our state leaders check any partisan differences at the doors of these chambers and work together for the good of all our citizens.

This good news and these good times argue not for

our inaction, but for our action. Now is the time, in relative calm, to think ahead, to see beyond the bend of the turn of the century and act courageously to prepare Texas for tomorrow. I hope you will continue to think boldly, continue the progress we began last session when we enacted historic reforms.

My fundamental priority is the education of our children. We must confirm the spirit and not weaken the intent of our new education code: that we trust local people to make the right decisions for local schools. We can and we should improve some parts of the code. I ask you to expand the menu of educational opportunity available to Texans by increasing the number of charter schools. The quantity and variety of charter schools should not be limited by some artificially imposed state cap, but only by the energy and imagination and enthusiasm of parents and educators eager for change in their schools.

Today our children are learning in safer classrooms with teachers — not troublemakers — in charge. Zero tolerance is working. And it will work even better when we clarify and strengthen the disci-

plinary code. Earlier I mentioned we do not face a fiscal or legal crisis, but we do face one crisis: too many of our children cannot read. One in five is failing our reading tests, and that number would be even worse if every child took the test.

This is unacceptable. You cannot succeed if you cannot read. All Texas children must learn the one skill that can make all the difference in their lives: reading. That is why I set the clearest and most profound goal for Texas: that every child, each and every child, should learn to read at grade level by the third grade and continue reading at grade level or better throughout his or her public school career.

Texans are responding to the reading initiative and you can help as well.

I ask you to fund reading academies — schools within schools that provide rigorous instruction in basic, building-block reading skills. This money will send a clear message to our schools: results matter, stay focused on our goal, and do whatever it takes to read our children to read.

God bless you all and God bless Texas.

Governor's increased sales tax proposal gets mixed reaction

AUSTIN (AP) — Everyone agrees that a property-tax break sounds good.

But after Gov. George W. Bush announced his proposal Tuesday to cut property taxes by creating a business activity tax and raising Texas' sales tax, some of the state's most powerful lobbies went on the defensive.

Groups representing retailers, restaurants and doctors, to name a few, said they would fight because the new taxes would drive down their operations.

"We want to work with the governor in securing property tax relief, but from the outset we have expressed our opposition to a value-added (business activity) tax," said Mickey Moore, president of the Texas Retailers Association.

The group represents 1,500 companies in the state, ranging from local merchants

to chain food and drug stores.

Bush's proposal would raise the state's 6 1/4 percent sales and motor vehicle sales taxes by one-half cent. It would also replace

"This is a pretty dramatic change."

Bob Kamm
senior vice president, Texas Association of Business & Chambers of Commerce

the corporate franchise tax with a new "business activity tax" — a 1 1/4 percent levy on total business sales over \$500,000, minus the cost of goods and capital invested.

Doctors, lawyers and others organized as professional associations do not currently pay franchise taxes, but would be subject to the business activity tax.

"If the costs go up too much, there is a very real risk in which physicians with a low-reimbursement, high-indigent patient load may be forced to leave those kinds of practices," said Kim Ross of the Texas Medical Association.

"We get hit with an increase in sales tax and then a value-added tax on top of that," said Richie Jackson, executive vice president of Texas Restaurant Association. "I don't know who the great untaxed is, but it's not restaurants."

Others, including energy companies, small businesses and farmers announced support for Bush's tax plan.

"The Bush proposal implements a much more balanced approach in taxing business," said Bob Stallman, president of the Texas Farm Bureau.

"At the same time, labor-intensive industry, which generates a much higher percentage of economic activity, shares a much smaller tax burden," Stallman said.

In the middle are legislators who are faced with approving a tax bill at a time when the business climate in Texas is considered strong.

In asking the Legislature to cut school property taxes by nearly \$3 billion and pay for it with budget savings and the new sales and business taxes, Bush said he wanted to head off a looming crisis. He said the state's reliance on property taxes to provide \$10 billion in public school funding is out of control.

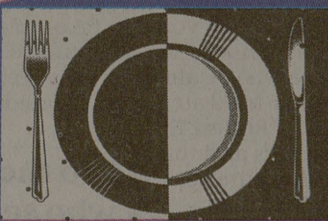
"This is a pretty dramatic change," said Bob Kamm, senior vice president of the Texas Association of Business & Chambers of Commerce, who supports Bush's proposal but acknowledges an uphill climb.

"Do lawmakers want to vote a \$3-billion tax bill when otherwise the business climate is pretty good and we have a balanced state budget? In that sense, it's going to be scrutinized by the Legislature," Kamm said.

Legislators such as Sen. Teel Bivins, Amarillo, chairman of the Senate Education Committee and a co-sponsor of the property tax relief bill, said creating a new tax system is the right thing to do.

"I think that we do have an opportunity to do something proactive for a change instead of just reacting to crises," Bivins said.

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