



LEAGUE of UNITED LATIN AMERICAN CITIZENS

The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the nation's oldest and largest Latino civil rights organization, has supported military veterans for nearly 100 years. We've advocated for key legislation like The PACT Act and The Brandon Act to ensure service members receive the care and benefits they deserve. LULAC is committed to advancing the wellbeing of all veterans by advocating for access to education, affordable housing, healthcare, and other essential services.

Protecting Service Members Through Better Screening and Accountability

Background

- The case of Jeremiah Copeland, a U.S. Navy sailor charged with the murder of Seaman Angelina "Angie" Resendiz and multiple sexual assault offenses, has raised urgent questions about military enlistment screening, access to juvenile records, and institutional accountability.
- Public reporting indicates that prior allegations involving Copeland occurred during his juvenile years and did not result in adult criminal convictions before his enlistment. These matters were either not visible through standard criminal background checks. As a result, the Navy appears to have lacked actionable information at the time of enlistment.
- The tragedy has prompted renewed scrutiny of how the military evaluates risk, how juvenile records intersect with federal suitability determinations, and whether current systems adequately protect service members.



Issues of Concern

- **Gaps between state juvenile systems and federal screening:** Juvenile records are often sealed or inaccessible by design. While this serves important rehabilitation goals, it can leave federal agencies without critical context when evaluating suitability for service.
- **Overreliance on self-disclosure:** Military enlistment relies heavily on applicants' honesty. When prior conduct did not result in convictions or is legally sealed, there may be no independent trigger for review or waiver consideration.
- **Lack of early intervention and monitoring:** Once enlisted, warning signs may not be escalated quickly or consistently across commands, particularly for junior service members and women in male-dominated environments.
- **Risk to service members and military readiness:** Failures in screening, reporting, or accountability undermine trust, safety, and morale, particularly for women and junior enlisted personnel.

Reasons to Support Reform and Oversight

- Improving screening, information-sharing, and early warning systems helps prevent harm and protects those who volunteer to serve.
- Reform can respect juvenile justice principles while still allowing limited, purpose-specific access to information necessary for federal suitability determinations.
- The goal is not to criminalize youth or deny second chances, but to ensure that serious patterns of violence are not missed or ignored.

Status

1. Jeremiah Copeland has been charged under the Uniform Code of Military Justice with murder and multiple serious offenses.
2. The case is proceeding through the military court-martial process, following an Article 32 preliminary hearing.
3. The Navy is under growing public and congressional scrutiny regarding:
 - Its handling of the disappearance and death of Seaman Resendiz;
 - Its internal response to sexual violence allegations;
 - Its enlistment screening and oversight practices.