



May 26, 2010

RE: ACLU Urges Support and a “YES” Vote for Murphy Amendment to Repeal “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), a non-partisan organization with more than a half million activists and members and 53 affiliates nationwide, we urge you to support the amendment being offered by Representative Patrick Murphy (PA) to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) (HR 5136) to repeal the discriminatory and counterproductive policy known as “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (DADT). This amendment is fully in keeping with both President Obama’s repeated calls for repeal of the policy, as well as the Pentagon’s ongoing review examining how best to implement it. If the amendment is included in the NDAA, repeal of the policy will not take effect until the completion of the Pentagon review currently scheduled for December 2010 and only after President Obama, Secretary Gates and Joint Chiefs Chairman Mullen certify that the new law will not have a negative impact on readiness, recruitment, retention, and other key factors affecting the military.

Since 1994, more than 13,500 qualified and committed service members, both men and women, have been fired under DADT simply on the basis of their sexual orientation. This discrimination has cost the United States a very steep price in terms of lost skills, many of which the Pentagon considers “mission critical.” In recent years, the military has discharged almost 800 mission-critical troops and at least 59 Arabic and nine Farsi linguists under DADT. Such discrimination not only hurts the individual men and women whose military careers are brought to a sudden and abrupt end, but actually serves to weaken the safety and security of other members of the armed forces and our overall mission.

Arguments that lifting the ban on allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly and honestly would somehow undermine military readiness or unit cohesion are simply not credible – with either members of the military or the American public. According to a 2006 Zogby poll, 73 percent of military personnel reported that they were comfortable with gays and lesbians. Another study found that one in four troops who have served in Afghanistan or Iraq personally know a member of their unit who is gay. Additionally, more than 100 retired admirals and generals have formally voiced their support for repealing DADT. Meanwhile, public support for open service by gay and lesbian troops has grown by a remarkable 31 percentage points since the policy was first introduced nearly two decades ago. A February 2010 *Washington Post/ABC News* poll found that 75 percent of Americans

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believe those who are openly gay and lesbian should be able to serve in the US military. In a recent letter to President Obama, President Truman's grandson, Clifton Truman Daniel, examined the parallels between the decision of his grandfather to desegregate the armed forces in 1948 with the current efforts to repeal DADT. Mr. Daniel wrote to President Obama:

There are strong parallels between the desegregation of the military and the debate over "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," the law that mandates the firing of a service member based solely on his or her sexual orientation. Opponents argue that allowing openly gay and lesbian service members to serve alongside their heterosexual comrades will endanger discipline and morale.

While I have no idea where my grandfather would stand on "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," I do know that he admired service and sacrifice. An estimated 66,000 gay and lesbian Marines, Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Coastguardsmen are willingly risking their lives to defend our nation, despite being treated as second class citizens.

It is long overdue to correct this discriminatory and counterproductive policy which has served to undermine our military and is a disservice to the millions of men and women who serve in it with pride and distinction. We urge you to stand on the right side of history and vote "YES" on the Murphy Amendment to the NDAA.

Sincerely,



Laura W. Murphy
Director, Washington Legislative Office



Christopher E. Anders
Senior Legislative Counsel