

11 May 2011

Dear Representative:

Last year, more than 310 members of Congress, Democrats and Republicans alike, gave the U.S. military its marching orders. Congress told the military that the discriminatory and destructive policy known as "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" should be brought to an end as long as it could be done in a way that would not harm military readiness. The Commander-in-Chief agreed when he signed the legislation in December 2010.

As we knew it would, the military has followed these orders and has been marching smartly toward repeal.

In recent weeks, Congress has heard reports on the military's progress. On April 1, the House Armed Services Military Personnel Subcommittee listened as Undersecretary of Defense Clifford Stanley and Vice Admiral William Gortney reviewed the implementation plans for the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." At that hearing, the subcommittee heard what the Department is doing to follow the direction of Congress. The required regulation changes were being "finalized" and "the services [were] carefully executing a deliberate and thorough roll-out of the necessary training." They also indicated that "the services have reported no issues or problems with the training and that all is going well."

The following week, on April 7, the full House Armed Services Committee heard from the chiefs of the services. The chiefs told the committee the military could successfully implement repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," that they were more than satisfied with their access to the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, that training of the forces was well underway, and that a preponderance of the force would be trained within weeks.

Despite having heard this testimony that the mission is almost accomplished, some in Congress want to force the military to change course. These opponents of repeal would derail or even "repeal the repeal." Having nearly achieved the objective, the armed forces would be told to reverse course and march in the other direction, which would be wasteful, confusing, and disruptive to the force.

It would be extraordinary for a new Congress to immediately overturn the military personnel policy decisions of the preceding Congress. We would interpret such a vote as an endorsement of discrimination against some of our service members who risk their lives to ably defend our nation and its Constitution. Such a vote would also evince enormous disrespect for the thoughtful processes used by our most senior military leaders to implement a congressionally authorized policy change.

During mark-up of the 2012 National Defense Authorization Act, members should reject harmful and unnecessary amendments -- including Rep. Duncan Hunter's expanded certification amendment, Rep. Todd Akin's restricted facilities amendment, Rep. Steven Palazzo's amendment rooted in unfounded fears about religious freedom, and Rep. Vicky Hartzler's amendment to inappropriately attach DOMA language to the NDAA -- that would serve simply to derail repeal implementation. We urge members to stand strong for prompt certification along with a smooth transition toward open service.

Sincerely,

African American Ministers in Action
ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal
American Civil Liberties Union
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees
American Veterans for Equal Rights (AVER)
Association of Flight Attendants - CWA
Basic Rights Oregon
California Faith for Equality
Center for American Progress
The Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies in Religion and Ministry (CLGS)
COLAGE: People with a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, or Queer Parent
The Community of Welcoming Congregations
Congregation Beit Simchat Torah, NYC
Courage Campaign
DC for Democracy
Democracy for America
DignityUSA
Equality Federation
Equality Hawaii
EqualityMaine
Equality North Carolina
Equality Pennsylvania
Equally Blessed
The Evangelical Network
The Fellowship
Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD)
Global Justice Institute
Human Rights Campaign
Indiana Equality
Institute for Judaism & Sexual Orientation at Hebrew Union College-JIR
Integrity USA
Keshet
Knights Out
Log Cabin Republicans
Lutherans Concerned/North America
Masjid An-Nural Isslaah, The Light and Reformation Mosque, Washington, DC
MassEquality
Metropolitan Community Churches
Military Partners and Families Coalition
More Light Presbyterians
National Coalition for Lesbian Rights
National Council of Jewish Women
National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Action Fund
National Stonewall Democrats
National Women's Law Center
NCLR (National Council of La Raza)

Nehirim: GLBT Jewish Culture and Spirituality
New Ways Ministry
NH Freedom to Marry
OutServe
People For the American Way
PFLAG National (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays)
PROMO
QSpirit
Rainbow Spouses
Reconciling Ministries Network (United Methodists)
Religious Institute
Room for All (Reformed Church in America)
Service Academy Gay and Lesbian Alumni Association
Service Employees International Union
Service Women's Action Network
Servicemembers Legal Defense Network
Servicemembers United
Seventh-Day Adventist Kinship International
Soulforce
Swish
Third Way
Truman National Security Project
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office
United Church of Christ Coalition for LGBT Concerns
United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries
United Church of Christ Office for Government and Professional Chaplaincies
United Church of Christ Office for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Ministries
Union for Reform Judaism
Vermont Freedom to Marry Task Force
Veterans and Military Families Caucus, Democratic Party of Virginia
Veterans and Military Families Caucus, Washington State Democratic Central Committee
Veterans for Common Sense
Veterans for Human Rights
VETPAC
VoteVets.org
Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual (WATER)
World Congress of GLBT Jews
Young Democrats of America