

September 20, 2010

Dear Senator:

We write to urge your support for repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (DADT), the current law prohibiting lesbians and gays from serving openly in the U.S. Armed Forces. Right now, one of the greatest threats to securing equality and strengthening our national security are possible amendments designed to delay and kill repeal language in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

As the recent cases of *Log Cabin Republicans vs. U.S.* and Lt. Col. Victor Fehrenbach demonstrate, DADT undermines national security by disrupting the work of well-qualified and experienced service members. A 19-year combat aviator with over 2,000 total flying hours and 25 million dollars in training, Lt. Col. Fehrenbach is now about to be drummed out of the Air Force after being outed by a spiteful civilian. This situation not only harms military readiness but also disrespects a combat veteran's selfless service.

DADT is the only law in the country that requires people to be dishonest about their personal lives or face the possibility of being fired. Poll after poll shows that the attitudes of today's service members have changed and they care more about their fellow service member's ability to help in accomplishing missions than who they are as a person. Further, the American public stands with them – 79 percent, a majority of Republicans, Independents and Democrats, support repealing DADT and allowing gays and lesbians to serve with integrity, openly and honestly.

Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Michael Mullen have told Congress that it is time to repeal DADT. Adm. Mullen testified that "we have in place a policy that forces young men and women to lie about who they are in order to defend their fellow citizens. For me, personally, it comes down to integrity – theirs as individuals and ours as an institution." In addition, Gen. Colin Powell and Gen. John M. Shalikashvili, both former chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; former Vice President Dick Cheney, defense secretary in the first Bush administration; and retired Gen. James Jones, former Marine Corps Commandant, have all indicated their support for repealing DADT.

Furthermore, the Comprehensive Review Working Group at the direction of the Department of Defense is currently assessing how best to implement a repeal of DADT. Their report is due December 1, 2010 and the repeal language currently before the Senate states that the report must be reviewed and certified by the President, Secretary of Defense and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff that repeal will not harm the military before any change in the DADT law would be enacted.

We urge you to support the Commander-in-Chief, Secretary Gates, Admiral Mullen and Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Carl Levin and vote against any effort to filibuster, strike or add amendments to the repeal language as it stands.

Sincerely,

African American Ministers in Action
American Association of University Women
American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
Anti-Defamation League
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees

American Veterans for Equal Rights
Association of Flight Attendants – CWA
Campaign for America’s Future
Center for American Progress
CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers
Equality Federation
Family Equality Council
Gay and Lesbian Advocates & Defenders
Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD)
GOProud
Human Rights Campaign
Immigration Equality
Knights Out: An Organization of LGBT West Point Grads and Allies
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
Log Cabin Republicans
Metropolitan Community Churches
National Black Justice Coalition
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of La Raza
National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce
National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Action Fund
National Stonewall Democrats
National Women’s Law Center
OutServe
Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) National
People For the American Way
Pride@Work
ProgressiveCongress.org
Service Academy Gay and Lesbian Alumni Association
Service Employees International Union
Servicemembers Legal Defense Network
Servicemembers United
Service Women’s Action Network
Third Way
Truman National Security Project
United Church of Christ
VoteVets