

# Mr. President, Lead the Way

## Dear President Obama:

Last October you declared, "I will end 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell.'" The year before on the campaign trail you said repeatedly "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" was a bad law and should go. Most Americans are with you; they believe this is the year.

Mr. President, your voice and leadership are needed now. In a few short weeks, you will be submitting your administration's defense budget to Congress. This is the logical place to end the ban. By proposing to repeal the law in your defense bill, you will make it clear to Congress and to the American people that we can eliminate this wrong in 2010. Already 186 Members of Congress have co-sponsored HR 1283 to end "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," and they are eager for your leadership.

Americans no longer tolerate this kind of discrimination on the civilian side of our Defense Department, nor should we tolerate it today on the uniform side. "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" is employment discrimination and there is no place for it anywhere in our government.

You cannot do this alone. Congress must act too. If you urge Congress and the American people to join you, we can win this battle. But if you do not include repeal in your defense budget, it will be tough to win repeal this year. You have yet to say to Congress, Let's finally end this embarrassing and archaic law and here's how we do it.

The time is now. Not next year or the second term. To delay another year is to stand aside and okay the daily firing of service members merely because they are gay. Patriotic gays and lesbians are fighting and dying for our country in two wars, just like their straight comrades-in-arms.

President Truman acted boldly to end segregation in the ranks, and strong military leadership was essential in ensuring its ultimate success. While congressional and military leadership will be essential in ending this discrimination in the ranks, Mr. President, we all look to you to lead the way.



**Aubrey Sarvis**

Servicemembers Legal Defense Network

