

SERVICEMEMBERS LEGAL DEFENSE NETWORK

A GUIDE TO “DON’T ASK, DON’T TELL”

WHAT IS “DON’T ASK, DON’T TELL”?

- “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (DADT) is a federal law mandating the discharge of any service member who is openly lesbian, gay or bisexual.
- There is no other law in the United States that mandates an employer to fire someone based on sexual orientation.
- The Pentagon has discharged almost 13,000 service members since the law was implemented in 1994.
- An honest statement of one’s sexual orientation to anyone, anywhere, anytime is grounds for discharge.

THE MOVEMENT TO END THE BAN

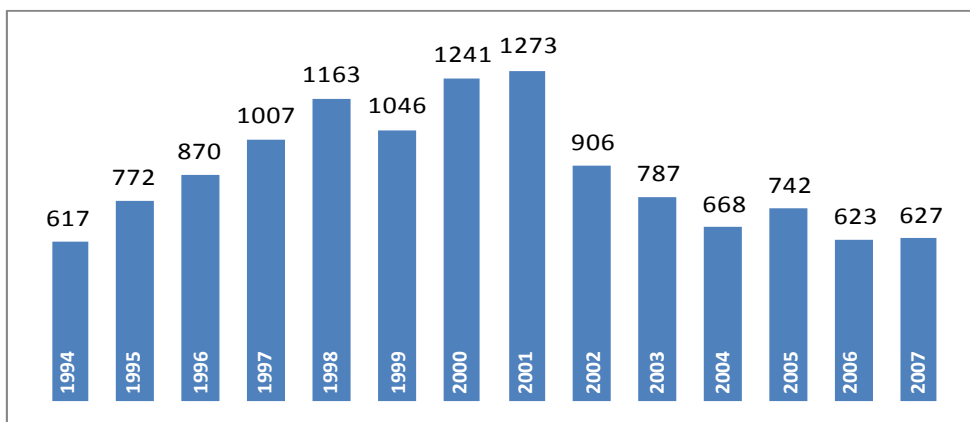
- Introduced in March 2009 by Rep. Ellen Tauscher, the Military Readiness Enhancement Act HR 1283, repeals “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” and replaces it with a policy of non-discrimination in our armed forces.
- President Obama supports repeal. “[The President] supports changing ‘Don’t Ask Don’t Tell.’ As part of a long standing pledge, he has also begun consulting closely with Secretary Gates and Chairman Mullen so that this change is done in a sensible way that strengthens our armed forces and our national security.” (Obama spokesman Tommy Vietor, March 3, 2009)
- Many high-ranking military and Pentagon officials support repeal, including former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General John Shalikashvili, USA (Ret.).
- 104 retired generals and admirals have urged Congress to repeal DADT.
- In the 110th Congress, 149 House cosponsors signed on to the Military Readiness Enhancement Act .

THE BAN HURTS MILITARY READINESS

- “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” discourages approximately 4,000 Americans from joining and remaining in the armed forces each year (Williams Institute, 2007).
- Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have significantly strained the military’s personnel resources (Pentagon classified assessment, February 2009). We must recruit and retain the greatest number of the best and brightest—especially during a time of war.
- The military has discharged almost 800 “mission-critical” troops and at least 59 Arabic linguists and nine Farsi linguists under “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” in the last five years.

DADT DISCHARGES HAVE FALLEN SINCE 2001

- Since the War on Terror began, “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” discharges have declined by almost half.
- During every major military conflict the number of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” discharges has dropped.



Total “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” Discharges 1994-2007

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WHY “DON’T ASK, DON’T TELL” SHOULD BE REPEALED

PENTAGON AND GOVERNMENT STUDIES SUPPORT OPEN MILITARY SERVICE

- A 1993 RAND report concluded that the U.S. military could lift “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” without detriment to military readiness.
- At least a dozen studies have concluded that open service does not undermine military readiness, troop morale or national security.

AMERICA’S ALLIES SUPPORT OPEN MILITARY SERVICE

- Most allied forces working alongside U.S. troops in Afghanistan and Iraq allow individuals to serve openly regardless of sexual orientation. Studies in the militaries of Australia, Israel, Great Britain and Canada have shown open service to have no effect on enrollment or retention .
- The total number of countries allowing openly gay service is 26. The US and Turkey are the only two original NATO countries that still have bans in place.

“DON’T ASK, DON’T TELL” HAS COST TAXPAYERS MORE THAN \$360 MILLION

- The Pentagon has spent more than \$200 million taxpayer dollars to replace service men and women discharged under the ban since 1993, according to a 2005 GAO report.
- A 2006 Blue Ribbon Commission Report found that the total cost of implementing “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” between FY 1994 and FY 2003 was at least \$363.8 million.

GAY PEOPLE ARE SERVING WITH HONOR AND DISTINCTION RIGHT NOW

- Today, there are at least 65,000 gay Americans serving on active duty and 1,000,000 gay veterans in the United States, according to the Urban Institute.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES DO NOT DISCRIMINATE AGAINST GAY PEOPLE

- The CIA, FBI and NSA do not discriminate based on sexual orientation. Only the military does.
- Many defense contractors hire gay and lesbian employees who work alongside U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

THE PUBLIC OVERWHELMINGLY SUPPORTS LIFTING THE BAN

- A July 2008 poll by *The Washington Post/ABC News* found that 75 percent of Americans favor allowing gays to serve openly in the military - up from just 44 percent in 1993. The poll found 64 percent of Republicans in favor of repeal.

ABOUT SERVICEMEMBERS LEGAL DEFENSE NETWORK

Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (SLDN) is a national, non-profit legal services, watchdog and policy organization dedicated to ending discrimination against and harassment of military personnel affected by “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” and related forms of intolerance.

SLDN Staff: 14 | Founded: 1993

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