

W.S.C. 2.

DRAFT

Address to
Title
Address

Date

RE: Lane County Commissioners support for the repeal of "Don't Ask Don't Tell"

Dear _____;

We, the Lane County Commissioners of Oregon support the repeal of the National Defense Authorization Act of 1994 (Public Law 103-160), more commonly known as the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue, Don't Harass" or simply the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. This policy has regretfully lead to the discharge of nearly 10,000 service members in its first ten years, including nearly 800 with "critical skills," of which 322 were linguists. As we understand it the Armed Forces is currently unable to meet its recruiting goals forcing extended tours of duty and lowered moral. This dangerous situation is exacerbated by a policy that denies to, highly patriotic LGBT Americans the right to serve, in the Armed Forces solely because of their sexual orientation.

We understand that this policy also affects our national security and military readiness in more insidious manners, including harassment, violence, secrecy, and lack of confidential medical care, all of which undermine unit cohesion. The Department of Defense has issued four reports since 1957 examining the presence of lesbian, gay, and bisexual service members who are serving in the Armed Forces. Findings from these reports indicate that these service members do not pose security risks nor impair military readiness, but rather perform their duties as well as heterosexual service members

Our understanding is that other top United States national security agencies do not discriminate against their personnel based on sexual orientation. Rather, the Department of Homeland Security, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the National Security Agency all allow personnel to serve openly. This leaves the Armed Forces as the only agency in the federal government that still uses sexual orientation to discriminate in employment decisions; while America's allies, including Israel, Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom, allow lesbian, gay, and bisexual service members to serve openly in their militaries. The United Kingdom, in fact, now actively recruits for these service members.

We believe that national security and military readiness will be best served by allowing every willing and able American to serve in the United States Armed Forces, without regard to sexual orientation. We are reminded of the language of the Declaration of Independence, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." Further we call to mind the last line of the pledge of allegiance: "...with liberty and justice of all". Finally we must look to the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment to the US Constitution as we call for the repeal of this public law and the reinstatement, with full benefits, of former service members who have been discharged since the passage of DADT in 1994. Those who are unwilling to re-enter, military service should, at the very least be granted upgrades to Honorable Discharge.

Thank you, "and may God Bless America"

Sincerely,

William A. Fleenor, Chair
Lane County Board of Commissioners