



December 2, 2010

Senator
Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: Section 654, Title 10, U.S.C., often mislabeled “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (DADT)

Dear Senator:

The undersigned represent some of the largest multi-racial, multi-ethnic, and multi-generational faith-based and policy organizations in the country, with approximately 40 million constituents combined. We urge you and other elected leaders to use your standing as members of the Senate to prevent the rush to repeal Section 654, Title 10, U.S.C. (1993), which is usually mislabeled by the subsequent Executive policy known as “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (DADT),¹ contained in the Defense Authorization bill. We ask that you delay consideration of the bill until January when the new Congress convenes.

The rush to repeal the 1993 law stating that homosexuals are not eligible to serve in the military, sometimes erroneously referred to by the Executive Order of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” would change our military in ways we cannot yet measure or understand. Our military leaders – with the exception of Adm. Mike Mullen – understand this and object to the repeal. In fact, Gen. James Amos, Commandant of the Marine Corps, said that he was concerned that the repeal of the law would have a negative effect on unit cohesion and combat readiness of the Marine Corps. Who among the members of the Senate is a better judge of that than is the Commandant?

It is a serious risk to national security to repeal DADT without first investigating thoroughly – in public hearings – the effect of the proposed repeal. We are engaged in a war on many fronts. Our troops are in harm’s way in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere. This is no time to experiment with social engineering of the military.

¹ The federal statute sets forth certain eligibility thresholds for serving in the armed services. Homosexuality is one among a number of disqualifying factors for service. The “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy was established by President Bill Clinton. The policy essentially states that if a soldier does not reveal his or her homosexuality, the military will not inquire about it. The DADT policy is often used as a reference to the federal law, but the two are distinct. While not wishing to conflate the two, this letter will use DADT to refer to both solely for purposes of this letter.

We are also gravely concerned about the effect that repealing DADT will have on religious freedom. One senior army general, Lt. Gen. Thomas Bostick, said that those who oppose repeal are guilty of unacceptable attitudes that he reportedly described as “bigotry.” Additionally, expert analysts have warned that a “non-discrimination” policy for sexual minorities will have broad-reaching effects on religious freedom. It is conceivable that chaplains will be forbidden to preach or speak about their denomination’s position on homosexuality.

The Defense Department report on the likely effects of repealing DADT was not released until November 30, 2010. There is simply not enough time between then and adjournment to investigate and deliberate about this very important issue. For that reason, any consideration of repeal should be put off until next year.

Moreover, we are deeply concerned about the methodology of the DOD report and survey. In view of General Bostick’s disturbing comments and Admiral Mullen’s and Secretary of Defense Gates’ unseemly cheerleading on this issue, we believe it behooves the next Congress to investigate whether proponents of repeal tried to create a climate of not-so-subtle intimidation in the Pentagon.

The rush to repeal DADT by January of 2011 is a slap in the face of the American people who are tired of bully politics. Moreover, the consequences of repealing DADT will no doubt result in service members leaving the military or refusing to join. We cannot afford attrition or demoralization of our military in light of the wars we are facing in the Middle East, not to mention the looming threat of North Korea.

The 1993 law was passed after twelve legislative hearings and field trips – our military deserves the same consideration today. We trust that you will support Sen. John McCain in blocking any effort to use the Defense Authorization Bill to repeal DADT. We urge you to allow sufficient time for hearings on DADT. The only way to give this issue the attention it deserves is to hold off hearings on DADT until 2011.

Sincerely,

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