

Military Leaders, GOP Senators, and Former Opponents Express Support for Repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” Policy

The Department of Defense recently released a comprehensive report reviewing the issues associated with implementing a repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” and making recommendations for a smooth transition. The report made clear that repeal would not impact overall military effectiveness. Rep. Patrick Murphy (D-PA) introduced a standalone bill today, with Majority Leader Steny Hoyer as the lead co-sponsor. Top military leaders, Republican Senators, and former opponents continue to express that it is critical that Congress pass legislation empowering the Defense Department to implement a repeal itself, rather than have a repeal imposed by the Courts.

Defense Secretary Robert Gates:

“Earlier this year, the House of Representatives passed legislation that would repeal Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell after a number of steps take place... Now that we have completed this review, I strongly urge the Senate to pass this legislation and send it to the president for signature before the end of this year... Given the present circumstances, those that choose not to act legislatively are rolling the dice that this policy will not be abruptly overturned by the courts.” [11/30/2010]

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen:

“Let me state right up-front that I fully endorse their report, its findings, and the implementation plan recommended by the Working Group... Should repeal occur, I share the Secretary’s desire that it come about through legislation; through the same process with which the law was enacted rather than precipitously through the courts.” [11/30/2010]

Senator Susan Collins (R-ME):

“After hearing powerful testimony from Secretary of Defense Gates and Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mullen, and reviewing the results of the Pentagon report, I remain convinced that the ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell policy,’ implemented under President Clinton, should be repealed. And, I agree with Secretary Gates that the issue should be decided by Congress, not the courts.” [12/03/10]

Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AL):

“After reviewing the DOD report and the testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee by Defense Secretary Gates and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mullen, I have concluded that it is time to repeal the ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ law... I agree with Defense Secretary Gates’ view that the military can successfully implement a repeal of the ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ law provided that proper preparations are implemented.” [12/08/10]

Senator Scott Brown (R-MA):

“Having reviewed the Pentagon report, having spoken to active and retired military service members, and having discussed the matter privately with Defense Secretary Gates and others, I accept the findings of the report and support repeal based on the Secretary’s recommendations that repeal will be implemented only when the battle effectiveness of the forces is assured and proper preparations have been completed.” [12/03/10]

Former Senator Sam Nunn (D-GA), opposed gays serving in the military while he was in Congress:

“In an interview this week, Nunn told The Associated Press that the law known as ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ should be overturned as long as there is enough time to prepare the troops for the change... Nunn said in the interview that he was swayed by the chiefs’ testimony that repeal could be done as long as the Pentagon had enough time to prepare. ‘That’s a huge change’ since 1993, he said. ‘I think that makes a big difference in perceptions of fairness and legitimacy in the law.’” [Associated Press, 12/10/12]

Prepared by the Office of the Majority Leader Steny H. Hoyer, 12/14/10