

Today Is Zero Hour (4.0)
An Appeal for Community Action to Repeal Don't Ask, Don't Tell

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Composition is a Community Happening

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The Prussians Are Coming!

Do you remember that scene from the movie, "Ferris Bueller's Day Off" where Ferris takes over a huge parade? He's singing "Twist and Shout" surrounded by dancing ladies entranced by his charismatic spell. Do you know what the parade celebrated? Most folks think it's for Oktoberfest since the young ladies wear German frocks. Surprise! It's a gay pride parade (sort of.)

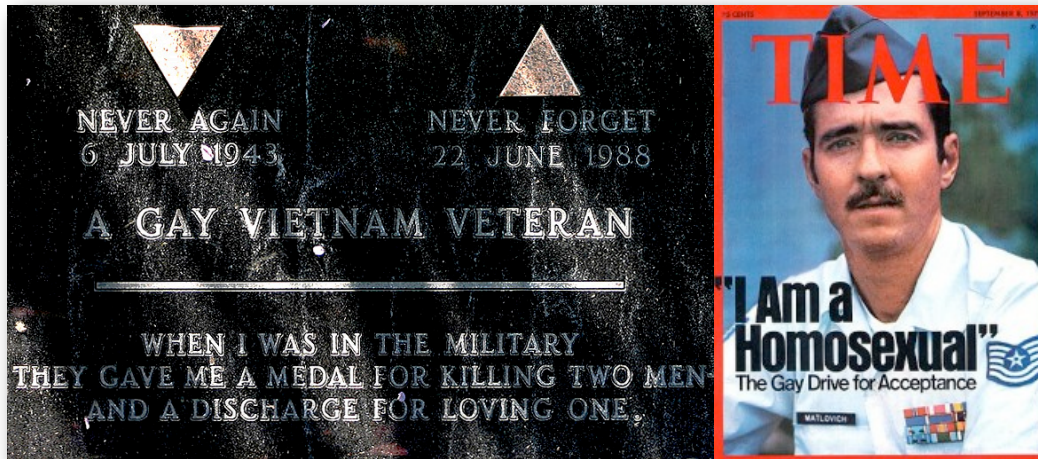


Okay...okay... before you get your lederhosen in a bunch, let me explain. The parade celebrates one of America's greatest military leaders. Once upon a time, there was a nobleman from Prussia - stay with me, this gets good - his name

was Friedrich Wilhelm August Heinrich Ferdinand von Steuben - you might know him as General Von Stueben, Baron von Stueben, or Stuebey to his closest friends (okay, I made up that last bit.) He was recruited by Benjamin Franklin to whip the rag tag American colonists into shape to fight the British army. Von Steuben is widely credited in creating the Continental Army's military drill and discipline program. He authored, "The Revolutionary War Drill Manual," the book that was the gold standard of U.S. military drill for decades with portions still used today. (1) He was the first Inspector General of the Army and commanded troops in America's victory at Yorktown in 1781. When a certain father of the nation - General George Washington - was passing out thank you cards for a job well done, General Von Stueben was at the top of his list. Oh yeah, one more thing. Von Stueben was gay, most folks knew about it, and no one seemed to care. (2) Happy Fourth of July, America!



So why the history lesson? Because 234 years after our nation's birth, we seem to have a big problem with gays serving in our military. In fact, the issue is being in debated in a lame duck session of Congress right this very second. And I need you to help me do something about it.



*"When I was in the military,
they gave me a medal for killing two men
and a discharge for loving one."*

*The epitaph for Technical Sergeant Leonard Matlovich,
winner of the Purple Heart and Bronze Star for combat action in Vietnam,
and the first US servicemember to challenge the ban on gays in the military.*

A Call for Action

Gay, lesbian, and bisexual (LGB) servicemembers were officially allowed to serve in the United States armed forces in 1993, 212 years after General Von Stueben led his troops to victory at Yorktown - effectively winning the American Revolution. However, America still bans them from being revealed as homosexual using a public law and military policy colloquially named, "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (DADT) (3). Despite 234 years (and counting) of honorable, loyal, and courageous service by American homosexuals in uniform, the United States continues to execute the same type of exclusionary policies used by countries like Iran, Syria, and China. Despite 36 countries allowing open service, most of them allies to the United States, the ban on open and honest service persists in the "land of the free, home of the brave" (4).

To date, DADT survives legal challenges and repeal efforts in Congress. Excuses abound with why the ban must remain in place. Now America finds itself at a cross roads. A "lame duck" session of Congress address the repeal of DADT. Or maybe not. Many argue that only civic action by America's citizenry will push the repeal effort forward (5). Many Americans are polarized about this issue, many more are ambivalent.

I want to tell you why you should care about repealing DADT. I want you to know why all servicemembers should be able to serve honestly with regards to their sexuality. I want to tell you why you should take action to repeal DADT. I want you to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves.

Full disclosure: I am gay and I served on active duty for 20 years in the U.S. Air Force.

DADT Defined

Don't Ask, Don't Tell has been the law of the land for almost 18 years. Previous to DADT, LGB Americans were prohibited from serving in the military. President Clinton signed DADT into law in 1993 as a compromise after he attempted to remove the ban through an executive order. There are many misconceptions about the policy from both the straight and gay communities.

In a nutshell, DADT replaces a previous ban on homosexual service in force since the 1950s (6). DADT ended the military's practice of asking recruits about their sexuality; you're not asked if you're gay when you join and you agree not to tell anyone you're gay while on active duty. Hence, Don't Ask, Don't Tell. A third stipulation, "Don't Pursue," is an often overlooked portion of the policy. DADT was supposed to end the military's practice of aggressive investigations to root out and discharge homosexuals in uniform. However, this is often not the case. This is what most folks know about DADT, however, this simplified explanation of DADT hardly scratches the surface of what the policy actually demands of all servicemembers, gay and straight.

*Reading my enlistment form in 1989, I didn't anticipate the question.
My 18-year old face flushed red just from reading it.
"Are you a homosexual or bisexual?"
There were only two options: "Yes and No."
Where was the option, "I don't know because I haven't even had sex, yet"?
Quickly, before the recruiter noticed my hesitation, I checked "No."*

In actuality, DADT goes far beyond not asking and not telling. It demands the LGB servicemember commit to a life of dishonesty with themselves and their fellow servicemembers. It demands heterosexual servicemembers either be complicit in the dishonesty or turn in the gay servicemember. It creates distrust between peers, it enforces lying, and ultimately it breaks down the cohesion beneficial in carrying out military missions. So if it's so bad, why is still around?

Many proponents of repealing DADT argue the President has the power as Commander-in-Chief to get rid of DADT, similar to how President Truman integrated the military in 1948 (7). However, once DADT became law, the power was out of the President's hands. Some scholars argue the President can use his "Stop Loss" wartime powers to suspend DADT; this may be viable, however this solution has not gained traction for political reasons (8). Ultimately, for a permanent end to DADT, Congress must repeal the law.

And that brings us to today. Congress is considering an amendment attached to the Fiscal Year 2011 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that, if passed, would put into place a series of conditions that would enable repeal of DADT. That explanation sounds clunky, but it is what it is. Many people think the amendment would outright repeal DADT and allow gays to serve openly. This is incorrect.

Even if Congress acts, history is made, and all the steps required to repeal DADT occur, open service LGB servicemembers is not necessarily automatic. If DADT is repealed, the Department

of Defense must then stipulate policy that will allow open service. It's complicated, yes. But it's important to understand the facets and intricacies of the proposed law. Through out this piece, I make note of both DADT repeal and open service as separate issues.

So where are we today? Well, the House of Representatives passed the NDAA with the DADT repeal provision on 28 May 2010 (9). The Senate Armed Services Committee passed the NDAA with the DADT repeal provisional amendment on 27 May 2010 (10). Progress to pass the NDAA in the full Senate stalled on 21 September and again on 9 December, 2010 when Senate Republicans filibustered Senator Reid's motion for cloture of the NDAA (11). This effectively killed DADT repeal using the NDAA. Senators Lieberman, Udall, and Collins immediately introduced an independent bill to repeal DADT with the hope to pass it during the lame duck session of Congress. Speaker Pelosi in the House says they have the votes. Timing is critical. This is why civic action is required to push repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell - *now more than ever* (5).

Chipping Away at the Ban

Despite having served in the closet for 20 years, I don't lightly suggest the ban on open service be dismissed. There are important issues to consider when talking about repealing DADT. Through out America's history, several reasons have been offered to justifying the ban on homosexuals from openly serving in uniform:

- Homosexuality was illegal
- Homosexuality was immoral
- Homosexuality was thought to be a mental illness
- Homosexuality was a security problem; servicemembers could be blackmailed
- Open homosexuality would disrupt unit cohesion and morale
- Military leadership was against gay servicemembers from serving openly
- Servicemembers at large were against serving with openly gay servicemembers

Throughout time, one by one, each of the reasons above have either gone away or been proven to be completely wrong.

- When homosexuality was decriminalized across America (12), the ban became a matter of morality.
- It can be difficult to measure morality, but, current polls across America and across the political divide show most Americans are *blasé* when it comes to gay America (13). According to a Washington Post / ABC News poll conducted in February 2010, 75% of Americans support repealing DADT — and majorities of both political persuasions are for repeal.

- The Eisenhower administration instituted a formal ban on homosexuals in uniform because homosexuality was listed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) (14).
- When homosexuality was removed from the DSM in the 1970s (14), the military drummed up “national security” as a reason to ban gays in the military (15). Despite its circular logic, the military argued homosexuals in uniform could be blackmailed and forced to divulge national secrets if they were allowed to serve. In actuality, gays were serving in the closet and were in fact being blackmailed because they weren’t allowed to serve openly and honestly (16).
- In 1993, DADT came along. For the first time in American history, LGB Americans are allowed to serve their country (that’s not to say that hadn’t been serving all along.) They could serve and die for their country with one condition. They had to stay in the closet about their homosexuality. Why? Because the goal post was moved, yet again. Uncle Sam rationalized the discovery of homosexuals in the military could harm unit cohesion and morale (6). Again, unbelievably asinine logic is used to justify the ban. DADT relies on the belief that if straight servicemembers find out their peers are gay the STRAIGHT servicemembers’ morale will decline and therefore unit cohesion will be degraded. Remember, the LGB servicemember has been serving with honor and not causing a fuss for over 200 years. However, if the straight soldier finds out he’s serving with a gay soldier, all hell will break loose. Uncle Sam’s solution? Welcome the gay soldier to the Army, but keep him from coming out of the closet.
- Enter Barack Obama. When President Obama campaigned in 2007 and 2008, he said he would remove the ban to open and honest service of LGB servicemembers (17). Again, like the carnival game of duck hunt, the standard to allow open service began to move.
- Proponents of DADT started to say they would support repealing DADT and allow open service IF military leaders supported it. When the current Secretary of Defense and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, along with several retired generals and admirals, started saying it was time to repeal DADT, the bar inched higher (18).
- The argument against repealing DADT then became the troops had to be the ones to make the ultimate decision whether they wanted to serve along side openly LGB servicemembers. So a military poll was commissioned. And surprise, surprise, the troops don’t care if they serve with openly LGB servicemembers. (31)

The arguments against gays serving openly and honestly have changed over time. What’s hasn’t changed is the fact gays and lesbians are serving - with honor, courage, and loyalty.

All the while, the debate continues. The excuses to deny equal treatment between heterosexual and homosexual servicemembers continue. The excuses for separate and unequal treatment continue. Here are a few more:

DADT Is a Success!

To some, the current policy works. Senator John McCain opposes the repeal of DADT citing servicemembers like myself as examples of how the policy works. I served 20 years on active duty, went to war, and retired honorably. I earned the highest possible performance evaluations all 20 years. I earned several awards for my service to include my combat service in Iraq. With credentials like these, I'm a prime example gays can serve with honor and distinction while remaining in the closet.

"Hey Boda, how are you doing buddy?"

"Not bad, you?"

"Still hung over from the weekend. We missed you at the club. Where were you?"

What McCain will not acknowledge are the unseen effects and costs of DADT. My military service record is stellar, yet it doesn't show I couldn't be honest or completely trust my peers. It doesn't show how I couldn't even answer the simplest of questions like, "What did you do this weekend?" My service record doesn't show I had an ulcer at the age of 21 from the fear of being discovered as gay in uniform. It doesn't tell McCain of my anxiety disorder, the therapy, and medication I took after spending ten years in a military closet. So no, Senator McCain, the policy does not "work".

Not Now

Others say now isn't the time to repeal DADT. America is engaged in a global war on terror. We're stretched thin with multiple combat zones including Afghanistan and Iraq. Nine years after 9/11, our forces are now going into their fifth year-long deployment into dangerous combat zones. The forces are stretched and stressed. They're coming back with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Adding a major change to personnel policy to all this doesn't make sense (19).

The irony of this argument is that our limited, over-burdened military force has been fighting two wars, deployed to combat zones up to five times (and counting), and reached record rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) - meanwhile, we're discharging troops for no other reason than being gay. Over 14,000 gay and lesbian servicemembers have been discharged under DADT. That's an average of 834 troops a year or 2.25 troops a day. Many of these discharges were infantrymen, interrogators and linguists proficient in the languages of our enemies. Today, there is a shortage of these mission critical specialties (20). Because of this shortage, all branches of military have lowered their standards for recruitment to meet the demand for the war machine. Minimum aptitude scores are lower; a high school diploma is no longer required to serve. More and more waivers for illicit drug use and felony crimes are granted to get recruits into uniform. Meanwhile, America kicks out fully-qualified, highly-trained, and motivated troops - because they're gay.

True Story: In 2005, the U.S. Army didn't have enough human intelligence collectors, also known as interrogators. The Army asked the other service branches for help. The Air Force offered to supply 50 airmen to help out the Army. These first-ever Air Force interrogators spent six months in training and deployed to Iraq for one year. Of course,

the absence from their normal Air Force jobs meant a shortfall in back at their home base. The Air Force interrogators didn't know Arabic, so civilian contract Arabic linguists were hired - a job an Army interrogator normally performs. How do I know this? I was one of the 50 Air Force interrogators.

Now go back in time to 2001 and meet Army Specialist Alex Nicholson. He knew five languages, including Arabic. While he was in Army interrogator school, a fellow student saw a personal letter written by Alex to a friend in Portuguese. In the letter, Alex mentioned liking another guy. The student turned Alex in for being gay and Alex was discharged under DADT - six months after 9/11 (21).

On September 10, 2001, America didn't have enough intelligence personnel proficient in the languages of our enemies. The terrorist group that carried out the attacks on September 11th sent a message telling their members they would attack the next day.

"One of the primary reasons behind the intelligence failures leading to 9/11 was that the Department of Defense's National Security Agency did not have enough Arabic linguists to translate the backlog of intelligence from Arabic into English before 9/11. [Arabic messages like,] 'Tomorrow is Zero Hour.' Any one of the 54 Arabic linguists discharged under Don't Ask, Don't Tell could have easily translated that phrase. So the question we need to ask ourselves is: Do we really care anymore if the person who translates the next piece of crucial intelligence is gay or straight as long as he or she gets the job done quickly and accurately and helps save American lives in the process?" — Army veteran Alex Nicholson (22)

To the detractors of repealing DADT: if not now, then when?

The Troops Don't Want Repeal

The troops are the ones that have to literally live with the change in policy. Some say it's unfair to force social change on the military. Special conditions exist in the military that don't exist in the civilian world. Close living conditions and group showers are most often cited. Enlistments and retention of personnel will suffer. Some groups go so far as claiming repeal will mean an increase in sexual predator crimes (27).

Each of these issues are important to consider. Troop morale and unit cohesion are vital parts of completing the mission. However, it's important to note the military is not the only institution where peers serve, fight, live in close quarters, or even shower together. Paramilitary organizations like police and fire departments across the country do not have bans against gays and lesbians. Unconvinced, opponents do not accept the equal status of paramilitary forces. The military is wholly different. Servicemembers are subjected to stresses and conditions like no other occupation in the United States. Federal institutions like the Central Intelligence Agency and Federal Bureau of Investigations support sometimes participate in military operations. Both have dropped their bans on homosexuals. Defense contractors like Black Water basically act as hired guns and carry out military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan does not have a ban on homosexuals. This comparison is still not good enough for most opponents of repeal. Military life and sacrifice are without equal and there are intrinsic aspects no other organization knows or

experiences.

It's important to note here that like so many other enterprises regarding freedom, independence, and liberty, America would not be first in this endeavor. Many other countries allow gays to serve openly in their militaries today and have for many years (6). Thirty-six countries to be exact. Many of them allies to the United States and part of the 9/11 "coalition of the willing" fighting along side America's military in combat zones in both Afghanistan and Iraq. What of them? What of their lessons learned and how open homosexuality did not impair or damage these militaries (6)? Opponents to repeal are unsurprisingly unmoved. They reason America's military deploys at a greater rate with greater numbers of troops doing longer tours than our allies. The comparisons between different militaries are apples and oranges. The issue needs to be studied to know the impact to the military.

Study, Study, Study

Opponents of repeal insist the issue of gays serving openly in the military needs to be studied prior to any change in legislation or military policy. I agree. Thankfully, we have a wealth of information in studies dating as far back as 1957. Not being good enough, another study was commissioned in February 2010.

- In 1957, the Navy commissioned a study with the snappy title, "*Report of the Board Appointed to Prepare and Submit Recommendations to the Secretary of the Navy for the Revision of Policies, Procedures and Directives Dealing With Homosexuals*" a.k.a the "Crittendon Report". It studied the impact of security issues surround homosexuals in uniform. It came to the conclusion, "that homosexual service members did not pose a greater security risk than heterosexual personnel." The Navy and the Department of Defense (DoD) suppressed and otherwise ignored the report's findings.
- Between 1988 and 1989, the DoD commissioned two reports from its The Defense Personnel Security Research and Education Center (PERSEREC). Both studied "trust issues" within the military. The first report confirmed the findings of the Crittendon Report. Unsatisfied with the outcome of the first report, a second report was commissioned. The second report reviewed the legal trends, scientific studies, and social and cultural developments. Authors of the first report concluded that security concerns had been exaggerated and noted that decriminalizing homosexual conduct in civilian society had "done much to decrease the danger of blackmail." Due to the aftermath from the first report's findings, the second report was never submitted to the Pentagon.
- In 1993, the civilian Rand Corporation was tapped by the DoD to study gays in the military as part of the DADT debate. President Clinton issued a memorandum insisting the study be "practical," "realistic," and "consistent with high standards of combat effectiveness and unit cohesion." Rand concluded that only one policy option existed to meet President Clinton's guidelines – "a policy based on clear standards of conduct equally applied to all

military personnel.” The report was basically ignored during the debate leading up to DADT.

- In 2006, a Zogby poll found that 75% of Americans were okay with openly gay servicemembers defending the country.
- In 2009, Air Force Colonel Om Prakash studied the issue of gays in the military for months as a student in the National Defense University. He published an article for the magazine, *Joint Force Quarterly*, stating that DADT essentially forces thousands of gay men and women to lead dishonest lives in an organization that emphasizes integrity as a fundamental tenet.
- In February 2010, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates created the “Pentagon Working Group” (PWG) in response to a directive from President Obama to study how a repeal of DADT would affect the military. Taking almost a year, the study’s results became public on 30 November 2010. The PWG interviewed gay and straight veterans, policy experts, and even conducted a poll of 400,000 randomly selected servicemembers. The results? Ninety-two percent of all troops who responded they had served aside someone they knew to be gay or thought to be gay were supportive of repealing DADT (31).
- At this point, it’s very clear opponents will not be swayed in their support of keeping the ban on openly gay servicemembers. Studies be damned, lessons from other militaries are irrelevant, and any evidence that openly gay servicemembers will not harm the military is not of interest. When their assumptions, opinions, quasi-facts, and conclusions are proven to be out-dated or completely wrong, they find and point to another bogey man.

Those Affected

For a moment, let’s remove the politics, the debate, the studies, and the arguments for and against repeal out of the picture. For a moment, reflect on how DADT affects those who wear the uniform. In 1973, the US military became an all-volunteer fighting force. Every single person who is in uniform today wants to serve and defend their country. Those serving today go in knowing they will very likely serve in a combat zone for some or most of their military careers.

- **Marine Sergeant Justin Crocket Elzie** was an embassy guard and a “Marine of the Year” winner. He outed himself on ABC News in 1993 during the initial DADT debate. He served for 14 years before he was discharged under DADT. During his four-year legal challenge, he served on active duty as an out Marine and was recommended for promotion three times (28).

- **Army Specialist Jose Zuniga**, selected as the 6th Army Soldier of the Year after combat service in Operation Desert Storm, outed himself the night before a gay pride March in Washington, DC. Zuniga urged the President to, “lead the way, show us the courage and conviction to guide our country, and specifically the military, into a new era of understanding.” He was promptly discharged under DADT and demoted under false charge (28).
- **Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Victor Fehrenbach** served 19 years and accumulated 2180 flying hours including 1238 hours in the F-15E fighter jet. He flew 88 combat missions. He served in combat zones in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq and earned one Meritorious Service Medal, nine Air Medals (one for heroism), five Commendation Medals, one Navy Commendation Medal, and two Achievement Medals. Fehrenbach currently faces discharge under DADT after a civilian acquaintance outed him to his command. His discharge under DADT is currently pending; if he's discharged before he makes 20 years on active duty, he will lose a lifetime worth of retirement benefits (28).
- **Cadet Katherine Miller** ranked ninth in her class of 1,157 at the United States Military Academy at West Point. She had a 3.829 grade point average and scored 367 points out of a theoretical maximum of 300 points on the Army's fitness test. She completed U.S. Army Airborne School. Miller resigned her appointment in her third year at West Point deciding she was unable and unwilling to serve under DADT. She now attends Yale University on a full scholarship and hopes to rejoin the Army when and if DADT is ever repealed (28).
- **I served my country on active duty for 20 years in the United States Air Force. I served overseas for almost 13 years. I served in combat for one year in Iraq as an interrogator. I was deployed to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Egypt, and Bahrain. I earned the highest possible performance evaluations 20 years in a row. I earned three meritorious service medals and several Air Force medals as well as an Army Achievement Medal. I was promoted early or “below-the-zone” and was the Communications and Information Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year for Headquarters Central Command (the command in charge of all forces in the Middle East.) I held one of the nation’s highest security clearances, my background and behavior having stood up to the most rigorous of background checks. I managed millions of dollars of equipment and led hundreds of men and women in uniform. At one point, I directly served the four-star general in charge of Air Forces across Europe. Despite all that, had I uttered three words, “I am gay,” none of that would have mattered and I would have been discharged under DADT.**

“I can't take it any more, Mom. I have to get out.”

“Why do you want to leave the Air Force after you invested so much time.”

“Because they discriminate against gays. I'll never be able to be myself if I stay.”

“Yes, that's probably true. But you understand if you get out, civilians discriminate, too. In fact, if

you're fired by a civilian, they probably won't tell you they fired you because you're gay."

I decided to stay in uniform and serve a career through retirement the next day.

My generation was the first to serve under DADT. Senator McCain was right. Gays and lesbians have proven we are able to serve silently and do tremendous service for the country with honor and courage. But should they have to? They don't serve in silence because they want to. They serve in silence to keep the peace with those intolerant towards homosexuals, plain and simple. Gays must dodge questions about their personal lives or outright lie to protect their careers. Is this just? Is this equal? During my 20 years of service, I risked my career being friends with anyone in uniform. Serving in uniform within that dichotomy, being told you're the best and yet, still not good enough leaves scars.

- **Marine Corporal Walker Burttschell** dropped out of college and joined the Marines the day after 9/11. Most of his fellow Marines knew he was gay and didn't care. However, one of his roommates threatened to out Burttschell to his commander. Burttschell's family didn't know he was gay at the time and a discharge under DADT was more than he could bare. He became suicidal and was hospitalized under a suicide watch. He confided to his psychiatrist about his sexual orientation. The comments on his medical record became the evidence used to discharge Burttschell under DADT (29).
- **I** suffered from a form of anxiety and depression for several years that required therapy and medication. Stop and think about that. How *exactly* does a gay servicemember seek help for issues related to being gay in uniform from military physicians and therapists? Remember, gays are allowed to serve under DADT, but they're not allowed to talk about to anyone. Doctors, psychologists, and even chaplains are not excluded in enforcing DADT. Tremendous numbers of troops are returning from combat with PTSD. Treatment of PTSD includes regression and reliving past incidents in the combat zone. Complete honesty with yourself and your therapist is required. I know this because I was diagnosed with mild PTSD after returning from Iraq. I refused treatment because I didn't know or trust the assigned therapist. I was two years from retirement and I chose recurring nightmares over treatment from a military doctor - my only option.



*The photo on the left was taken in the 1970s.
The photo on the right was taken on 15 November 2010.
Both depict protesters at the White House
demanding equality for gay and lesbian servicemembers.*

A Call for Action - Redux

Stories like those described above are not the exception. They are the rule when it comes to service under DADT. It's estimated there are 65,000 gay and lesbian servicemembers serving in uniform today (20). Over 14,000 servicemembers have been discharged under DADT costing the country millions of dollars (the cost to recruit and train the gay servicemember, the legal fees associated in discharging the gay servicemember, and of course, the cost to recruit and train their replacement are the associated costs of DADT) (20). What cannot be replaced with each new recruit are the years of experience those discharged take away from the military.

Several actions are currently on-going to strike down DADT and relegate it to the checkered history of America. A lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of DADT is currently in progress. A Ninth Circuit federal judge ruled DADT unconstitutional in September, 2010. President Obama's Justice Department appealed and the case will probably end up being decided by the Supreme Court.

Prevailing opinions say repealing DADT through Congress is the only *reliable* way towards allowing gays and lesbians to eventually serve openly in uniform. And there is hope. Legislation is winding its way through Congress, but is currently stalled in the Senate. President Obama says he supports repeal and will sign a bill containing repeal if it reaches his desk (17). However, many say he's tepid in his support. The bill will never reach his desk unless the People act - NOW.

The Senate returned on November 15th for a lame duck session before the end of the year. The exact mechanics of repeal today are complicated and with an extremely short amount of time (5). The prospects for repeal are dim in the lame duck since the midterm elections bolstered conservative voices who oppose repeal. The chances of repeal drop to probable zero after the new, more conservative Congress is seated in January 2011.

Hey You - Yes, You!

How can you help? Act now and ensure Congress hears your voice. Call your senators - both of them, call your Congressman. The Capitol Hill Switchboard phone number is: (202) 224-3121. Tell them the state you're from and they will connect you to your senator or representative. Ask to speak to them personally. If that's not possible, leave a message with their aide. If no one answers the phone, leave a voice mail. Then, pick up a pen and paper and actually write a letter to your senators. Here's how: <http://www.congress.org/congressorg/issues/basics/> . Having to open an envelope and read someone's handwriting shows much more effort than sending an eMail. Too much to ask? Then at least send an eMail. Find their Twitter or Facebook account and leave a message there. It's not as effective, but it's better than nothing.

If the repeal effort fails in December, we must start rebuilding the repeal effort. For the ambitious, start a petition for repeal. Collect as many signatures as possible and mail it to your senators, congressman, and the President. The next time your lawmakers come to town, schedule an in-district visit and meet with your representatives. Better yet, lobby Congress yourself. It's easy, just call your representatives' Washington office and schedule a meeting. Fly up and meet with them. I did it in May 2010 with a couple hundred other veterans when we "stormed Capitol Hill" and asked Congress to repeal DADT (30).

The repeal community has played all of these cards to get Congress to act. We swamped the phone lines in Congress. We collected thousands of post card petitions and delivered them to our lawmakers. Documentaries were produced and books were written. A handful of veterans used nonviolent protest and civil disobedience to get the media to pay attention to the issue. If you truly care about this issue, you might consider doing same if you want to see real progress. It worked for Ghandi, why not you?

Bottom line: Every person who dons the uniform of their country deserves the same respect and treatment as their peers. American LGB servicemembers currently are denied equality while they defend America's values of freedom, liberty, and justice. What will you do to speak for those who defend your freedom of speech, yet do not have it themselves?

The United States Air Force has three core values:

1 - Integrity First

2 - Service before self

3 - Excellence in all we do

*"Don't Ask, Don't Tell" violates the first core value,
takes advantage of the second, and compromises the third.*

Epilogue

Writing about and keeping up with something happening in real time is almost impossible. The moment the “Save” button is hit, the record is obsolete. Such is this topic. From 1993-2009, the events surrounding DADT moved at a glacial pace. When President Obama said he wanted to repeal DADT in his 2010 State of the Union address, momentum began to build.

If this was happening a decade or two ago, documenting recent DADT actions would have required a harried reporter running for the nearest phone booth to get the bleeding edge news on the front page of the city paper. Today, blogs capture the blow by blow fight between those who want repeal and those who don't.

This work attempts to capture the history and the reality today of what's going on with the repeal effort. It's with this understanding I ask the reader to allow me one conceit. The moment I end this sentence, everything could be different.

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