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Public Advocacy Center, Room 223

Touro Law Center

225 Eastview Drive, Central Islip NY 11722

631 650 2310

www.saltlaw.org

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May 10, 2010

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi

Speaker of the House of Representatives

United States Congress

235 Cannon HOB

Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi:

The Society of American Law Teachers – SALT – is writing to encourage you to schedule a vote on repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell when the House considers the Department of Defense Fiscal Year 2011 Authorization Request bill the week of May 24. As Speaker of the House, you serve an important role at this critical time. SALT is speaking for the thousands of men and women in uniform who are unable to speak for themselves. Don't Ask Don't Tell undermines national security, wastes taxpayer dollars, and is the only law in the country that requires people to be dishonest about their personal lives or face the possibility of being fired. The time for action is now.

In his State of the Union speech, President Barack Obama said it is time to repeal this discriminatory law. We agree. Military leaders support a review and repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Michael Mullen have told Congress that it is time to repeal the law. Adm. Mullen testified that "...we have in place a policy that forces young men and women to lie about who they are in order to defend their fellow citizens. For me, personally, it comes down to integrity – theirs as individuals and ours as an institution." In addition, Gen. Colin Powell, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Gen. John M. Shalikashvili, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; former Vice President Dick Cheney, defense secretary in the first Bush administration; and retired Gen. James Jones, former Marine Corps Commandant, have all indicated their support for repealing Don't Ask Don't Tell.

The vast majority of Americans — including majorities of Republicans, Independents and Democrats — recognize that on the battlefield, it does not matter whether a service member is lesbian, gay or straight; what matters is that a soldier gets the job done. Public support for open service by lesbian and gay troops has grown by 31 percentage points since Don't Ask Don't Tell was introduced nearly two decades ago. A *Washington Post*/ABC News poll found that 75% of Americans believe openly lesbian and gay citizens should be able to serve in the U.S. military. Importantly, a recent Quinnipiac University Poll also showed that 57% of voters in House of Representatives

"battleground districts" support repeal.

There is no need for Congress to delay a vote until the Pentagon has completed its study. Although the Department of Defense has commissioned a Working Group to conduct a comprehensive review of the issues associated with repeal, its task is to study how best to implement repeal of the law, not to determine whether or not the Don't Ask Don't Tell law should be repealed. The Working Group report, which will be completed by December 1, 2010, is intended to serve only as a guidepost for implementation; it is not necessary that the review be completed before Congress repeals Don't Ask Don't Tell.

We strongly urge you to include repeal language in the Defense Authorization Bill for Fiscal Year 2011. The bill can be further amended to delay implementation until 180 days after the bill is signed into law providing the Working Group an opportunity to complete its work and implement its recommendations.

Each day that Congress fails to act, lesbian and gay service members must continue to serve in silence. They must lie to avoid prematurely ending their military careers and this country will continue to lose brave and qualified Americans willing and able to serve this country. Please allow the House to vote on repeal this month.

Sincerely,



Raquel Aldana
Co-President



Steven Bender
Co-President

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Since 1974, SALT has been an independent organization of law teachers, deans, law librarians, and legal education professionals working to make the profession more inclusive, to enhance the quality of legal education, and to extend the power of legal representation to under-represented individuals and communities. www.saltlaw.org

cc: Rep. Steny Hoyer
Rep. Patrick Murphy
Rep. Ike Skelton