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May 12, 2010

Senator Carl Levin

Chairman, Senate Armed Services Committee

269 Russell Office Building

U.S. Senate

Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Levin:

The Society of American Law Teachers – SALT - is writing to thank you for your continued leadership on the repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell. We applaud your decision to become a lead sponsor on the Military Readiness Enhancement Act (S. 3065) as well as your efforts to make this a high priority issue in the Senate. Through your efforts and leadership, you are speaking for the thousands of men and women in uniform who are unable to speak for themselves.

We are also writing to urge you to amend the Department of Defense Fiscal Year 2011 Authorization Request bill currently before your Committee to include language repealing Don't Ask Don't Tell. As Chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee, you serve an important role at this critical time. 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.

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study how best to implement repeal of the law, not to determine whether or not the Don't Ask Don't Tell law should be repealed.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 complete 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. The bill can be amended to delay implementation until the Working Group has completed its reports and forwarded its findings to the Pentagon and Congress.

On May 8, Secretary Gates delivered remarks at the Eisenhower Library during which he made a remarkable statement: "What is required going forward is not more study, nor do we need more legislation. It is not a great mystery what needs to change. What it takes is the political will and willingness, as Eisenhower possessed, to make hard choices, choices that will displease powerful people both inside the Pentagon and out."

While Secretary Gates' remarks were made in the context of the defense budget, they are equally apt when it comes to repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell. What is needed is leadership and the political will to move forward to repeal this discriminatory law. But unlike budget cuts, this is not a hard choice. President Obama, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretary of Defense, civilian and military leaders, as well as a vast majority of Americans support open service.

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 lead; amend the Department of Defense Fiscal Year 2011 Authorization Request bill currently before your Committee to include language repealing Don't Ask Don't Tell.

Respectfully submitted,



Raquel Aldana
Co-President



Steve 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: Senator Evan Bayh
Senator Jim Webb
Senator Ben Nelson
Senator Scott Brown
Senator Robert Byrd
Senator Susan Collins
Senator Joe Lieberman
Senator John McCain