

## **Washington University School of Law Coalition for Equality**

To: Members of the Washington University Community

The undersigned members of the student body, faculty, and administration of the Washington University School of Law write to affirm our support of the Coalition for Equality and oppose the military's ban on open service by gays, lesbians and bisexuals. We believe that this discriminatory policy is unjust, and that it weakens our nation's military.

First, let us note that JAG lawyers have been a particularly important voice in protecting our constitutional traditions of respect for human dignity and due process. We are glad that Washington University law students want to become JAG lawyers, and our strong dissent to this discriminatory policy in no way reflects a negative view on our part of the students who interview with JAG, JAG lawyers, or service members of the U.S. military.

The military's gay ban is the only federal law that requires the federal government to fire someone because of their sexual orientation. Since the gay ban was enacted into law in 1993, the military has fired over 11,000 people because of their status as gay men, lesbians or bisexuals. These are men and women who have served our country honorably and with distinction. They have lost their livelihood and career simply because of their sexual orientation.

In addition to being unjust, the military's gay ban actually hurts our nation's military readiness. The gay ban has forced the military to discharge over 60 Arabic and Farsi linguists in the last six years, along with intelligence analysts, pilots, doctors, nurses, and others with critical skills. It costs the military hundreds of millions of dollars to train replacements for these highly-skilled service members. Most of the nations that have deployed forces along side ours in Iraq and Afghanistan allow gays to serve openly, including the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada. In a 2006 poll, most U.S. military personnel reported that they are comfortable with lesbians and gays. It's time to end the military's gay ban.

Legislation that would lift the military's gay ban is now pending in Congress. The Military Readiness Enhancement Act (H.R. 1246) would replace the gay ban with a policy of nondiscrimination based on sexual orientation. The Coalition for Equality at Washington University is proud to join law students from across the country in speaking out against discrimination. We hope that you will join our effort by adding your name to the list of Coalition for Equality supporters.