



Hand Delivered

May 26, 2010

United States House of Representatives Armed Services Committee
2120 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

United States Senate Armed Services Committee
Room SR-220C
Washington, DC 20510

To the Honorable Ike Skelton, Chairman, and the Honorable Howard P. McKeon, Ranking Member, and the Honorable Carl Levin, Chairman, and the Honorable John McCain, Ranking Member:

We are writing in strong support of the recommendations of the President, the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and many other current and former military leaders, calling for repeal of the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy of the United States military forces.

As deans of schools of public policy and public management, we believe strongly that public service is among the highest callings. We often ask that our students make sacrifices in pay or career security in order to serve the public good. A subset of our students sacrifice even more: they put their lives on the line for their country and community. We are proud of the many current and former members of the armed forces that attend our schools. Their perspectives and experiences enrich our classrooms immensely, and they are stellar examples of exceptional public leaders. We celebrate their service, and learn from their leadership and courage.

Thus, it is extremely disturbing to hear directly from some, and to observe in others, that those who are gay or lesbian are forced by the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy to make the wrenching choice between being true to themselves and serving their country. When we turn away a person of great character and talent who stands ready to risk his or her life to serve and defend our country in this time of great need and peril, our nation is weaker. If we allow some of our bravest citizens to fight only if they are willing to compromise the very candor and character that the military seeks to instill, we put those values at risk. It deprives our country of some of the brightest leaders, and deprives individuals of the opportunity to contribute to, and to benefit from, military service.

We realize that the repeal is controversial in some quarters. So too were policies that overcame barriers created by race or religion or gender. Such changes are never easy, and opponents always offer some compelling concerns. But in every case, the nation came to realize that young people who are willing to die in defense of liberty deserve our admiration and support and the respect of being treated equally.

Sincerely,

J. Brian Atwood
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Cc by postal mail:

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