

From: Raughter, John B.
To: Public Relations Division
Sent: 5/25/2010 4:07:01 PM
Subject: Release: The American Legion to White House: 'Don't repeal 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell'

Attachments:

The American Legion to White House: Don't Repeal 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell'

INDIANAPOLIS (May 25, 2010) - In a letter to President Obama, the head of the nation's largest wartime veterans organization stated his group's opposition to repealing the military's 'don't ask, don't tell' (DADT) policy.

"We feel strongly that the current policy has served the U.S. military well for 17 years and it would not be wise to make a major cultural change in the middle of two wars and with tension rising on the Korean peninsula," The American Legion National Commander Clarence E. Hill wrote. "Moreover, the Department of Defense has already directed a study on the policy and it would be premature to act before the commission conducting the study releases its findings. It defies logic."

The American Legion is concerned with reports that members of Congress might seek to repeal the law.

"House Armed Service Committee Chairman Ike Skelton, who sat on the committee when DADT was implemented, opposes its repeal. Additionally, Marine Corps Commandant Gen. James Conway and Army Chief of Staff George Casey have also voiced concerns about the impact such a change would have on the current force structure," said Hill, a retired U.S. Navy captain and veteran of the Gulf War.

"The military is a unique environment, in which DADT has worked well without diminishing our nation's war-fighting capability. Indeed, the core purpose of our military is to fight and win our nation's wars," Hill continued. "We believe that repealing the DADT policy at this time may well be detrimental to the security of our nation. Therefore, we urge you to postpone any such decision until the wisdom of this action has been fully studied."

With a current membership of 2.5-million wartime veterans, The American Legion was founded in 1919 on the four pillars of a strong national security, veterans affairs, Americanism, and youth programs. Legionnaires work for the betterment of their communities through more than 14,000 posts across the nation.

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Media contacts: *Washington: Marty Callaghan, 202-263-5758/202-215-8644; Indianapolis: John Raughter (317) 630-1253, cell (317) 441-8847. A high resolution photo of National Commander Hill is available at www.legion.org.*

May 25, 2010

The Honorable President Barack Obama

The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

The American Legion is concerned about reports that you might seek an amendment in Congress which would end the military's "don't ask, don't tell" (DADT) policy.

As the nation's largest wartime veterans organization, we feel strongly that the current policy has served the U.S. military well for 17 years and it would not be wise to make a major cultural change in the middle of two wars and with tension rising on the Korean peninsula. Moreover, the Department of Defense has already directed a study on the policy and it would be premature to act before the commission conducting the study releases its findings. It defies logic.

House Armed Services Committee Chairman Ike Skelton, who sat on the committee when DADT was implemented, opposes its repeal. Additionally, Marine Corps Commandant Gen. James Conway and Army Chief of Staff Gen. George Casey have also voiced concerns about the impact such a change would have on the current force structure.

The military is a unique environment, in which DADT has worked well without diminishing our nation's war-fighting capability. Indeed, the core purpose of our military is to fight and win our nation's wars. We believe that repealing the DADT policy at this time may well be detrimental to the security of our nation. Therefore, we urge you to postpone any such decision until the wisdom of this action has been fully studied.

Sincerely,

Clarence E. Hill

Clarence E. Hill
National Commander
The American Legion

CC: U.S. Congress
Secretary of Defense Robert Gates
Joint Chiefs of Staff