



22 June 2011

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

It is with deep sorrow and grave concern that we observe that one of the first acts of our new Secretary of Defense will be the certification of the repeal of DADT. We had hoped that he would have taken the time to consider and respond to the many questions and concerns that numerous senior military leaders, both active and retired, and dozens of Congressional leaders have raised. We believe Secretary Panetta has listened to the voices of the vocal minority and failed to listen to the majority of concerned citizens who want our military to continue to be the strongest and most combat ready in the world. We continue to believe that our military, now straining under the burden of years of continued combat, should not be a place of social experimentation.

We hope that Secretary Panetta's decision will not be seen as a government endorsement of homosexual conduct. Americans are deeply divided on this issue, and moral debate and dialogue must be continued in a civil and respectful manner. The rights and views of the many Americans, including a large number of service members, who disagree with the administration on this issue must be respected. Service members must not be forced to endorse practices or beliefs that violate their deeply held moral convictions.

Our endorsed chaplains will continue to serve all military members whatever those members' sexual practices or moral opinions may be. Our chaplains will continue to provide spiritual support and counsel to all Service members. We will encourage and stand behind them as they seek to cooperate with this repeal without compromising their faith and moral convictions. Our nation's leaders must continue to ensure that chaplains will not be asked to violate their consciences or renounce the teachings of their faith. The religious freedom of all chaplains and service members must be protected. Our chaplains will assist their commanders in the complex issues that are sure to arise. They will continue to respect and serve those with whom they disagree. We hope that those who disagree with them will offer the same respect.

May God help our Nation in the coming days.

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