

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS
OF THE UNITED STATES
FOUNDED 1899



THOMAS J. TRADEWELL, SR.
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

VFW MEMORIAL BUILDING
200 MARYLAND AVENUE, NE
WASHINGTON, DC 20002-5799

May 25, 2010

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515-6501

Dear Madam Speaker:

The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States is against overturning the Pentagon's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, as well as all attempts to repeal Public Law 103-160 (Section 654, U.S. Code Title 10). This position is reflected in VFW Resolution #426, which was passed last year by delegates attending our 110th VFW National Convention in Phoenix.

The VFW is fully aware that societal norms regarding homosexuality have changed since the 1993 passage of PL 103-160, but the mission of our Armed Forces has not. Our nation cannot afford to weaken its military with social engineering that focuses more on individual behavior than the safety and security of the nation as a whole.

Repeal advocates cite national polls in which 70 percent of Americans believe "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" should be abolished, yet results from a February 2010 Army Times Publishing Company survey said 51 percent of today's military opposes gays and lesbians serving openly, compared to only 30 percent who favor repeal. Civilians may deem certain habits or standards of conduct as acceptable, but forcing societal norms on a military institution that the great majority of society chooses not to join is hypocritical.

Repeal advocates say 13,000 servicemen and women were discharged under "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" since its inception in 1993. Not mentioned is 80 percent of those discharges were voluntary, or that more than 3 million service members — all of whom with equally critical yet equally replaceable skills — were discharged or retired over the same 17-year period.

Repeal advocates also claim "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" is discriminatory and violates individual civil rights. A key civil right is fair treatment under the law, whereas discrimination is the unfair treatment of one person or group, usually because of prejudice about race, ethnicity, age, religion or gender. This entire issue is about sexual orientation and nothing more. One's sexual persuasion should not merit protection under our nation's

civil rights or antidiscrimination laws anymore than the 75 percent of today's youth who are ineligible for military service due to their health, physical fitness or aptitude.

Every American should have the opportunity to serve in uniform, but the needs of the nation and military must come before the needs of the individual. Those who voluntarily serve in our Armed Forces do so with the full knowledge of having to adhere to the Uniformed Code of Military Justice, as well as to the customs, courtesies and traditions that bind our military services together as one. The military is about the "whole," not the individual, and the rules and regulations are there for the good order and discipline of all service members.

Madam Speaker, the VFW is fully aware that this issue is all about fulfilling a campaign promise, just as it was in 1993. While we oppose any change to the current "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, as well as to Public Law 103-160, we do urge you and your colleagues to wait until the DOD working group finishes its 10-month review. Those who are in the fight — and their families — have earned the patience of Congress to weigh all the facts and implications before voting.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Thomas J. Tradewell Sr." The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

**THOMAS J. TRADEWELL SR.
Commander-in-Chief**

**cc: House Minority Leader Boehner
House Armed Services Chairman Skelton
House Armed Services Ranking Member McKeon
Senate Majority Leader Reid
Senate Minority Leader McConnell
Senate Armed Services Chairman Levin
Senate Armed Services Ranking Member McCain**