

<http://www.news-medical.net/news/20100205/APA-urges-Pentagon-and-Congress-to-end-restrictions-on-gays-and-lesbians-serving-in-military.aspx>

APA urges Pentagon and Congress to end restrictions on gays and lesbians serving in military

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Cites large body of scientific research

The American Psychological Association urged both the Pentagon and Congress today to move swiftly to end the restrictions on gays and lesbians serving openly in the military, noting that there are decades of scientific research demonstrating no threat to military readiness or morale.

"While we were heartened by the congressional testimony of Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Admiral Mike Mullen, we believe that a year to study the matter and another year to implement change is too long," said APA President Carol Goodheart, Ed.D. "The military has proved itself willing, able and effective in the integration of African Americans and of women. This experience can and should inform efforts to end the current situation in which gay and lesbian service members, who everyone acknowledges are currently serving, must conceal their sexual orientation to avoid being discharged."

Admiral Mullen, who is chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Secretary Gates testified on Tuesday before the Senate Armed Services Committee in favor of allowing gay men and lesbians to serve openly in the military. President Obama has also voiced support for repeal of the current prohibition but has declined to issue an executive order to do so.

The American Psychological Association strongly opposes the current "don't ask, don't tell" policy for lesbian and gay people in military service. This stance reflects the APA Policy Statement on Sexual Orientation and Military Service, adopted by the APA Council of Representatives in July 2004. In this policy statement, the association reaffirmed its opposition to discrimination based on sexual orientation and its commitment to disseminating scientific knowledge to ameliorate the negative effects of the current law through training and education.

APA has also lobbied in support of the Military Readiness Enhancement Act, which currently has 187 co-sponsors.

"We know that some openly gay or lesbian service members have served in the U.S. military with no ill effects to others," Goodheart said. "In fact, a stop-loss policy during the Persian Gulf War prevented discharges for homosexuality during that war."

In addition, Goodheart noted that repealing the current policy would improve the mental health of gay and lesbian people already serving in the armed forces.

"The military can be seen as a highly stressful environment, especially in wartime. It is important to encourage military personnel to seek mental health care when needed in order to promote their well-being and effectiveness," she said. "The 'don't ask, don't tell' policy, however, works against effective access to mental health services by increasing the anxiety of gay and lesbian military personnel and then discouraging them from seeking mental health care."

Source: [American Psychological Association](#)