

The Military Readiness Enhancement Act (HR 1283/S 3065)

NCJW MESSAGE: NCJW strongly supports the Military Readiness Enhancement Act (MREA), a bill that would end the military's current "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (DADT) policy and replace it with a law that would prevent discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. A society's laws reflect the values of that society. Our nation must unequivocally reject laws and policies that are prejudicial by design. Our nation's military has suffered under this law and repeal would enhance our military quantitatively and qualitatively.

TALKING POINTS:

- ▶ **The vast majority of Americans—including members of the military, and majorities of Republicans, Democrats, and Independents—support repealing DADT.** According to polling conducted by the Human Rights Campaign, 75 percent of Americans believe openly gay and lesbian citizens should be able to serve in the US military (as compared to 62 percent in 2001 and 44 percent in 1993). Additionally, a 2006 Zogby poll of soldiers returning from Afghanistan and Iraq showed that 73 percent of soldiers reported being "comfortable...in the presence of gays," and only 37 percent opposed repealing the DADT law.
- ▶ **Don't Ask, Don't Tell threatens military readiness and security.** Our military needs the service of LGBT Americans. Our national security is threatened by the discharge of over 13,000 capable service members, including 800 specialists with vital skills such as Farsi and Arabic translation. According to a 2010 report by the Williams Institute, repealing the DADT law could attract an estimated 36,700 men and women to active duty service and 12,000 more individuals to the Guard and Reserve.
- ▶ **Don't Ask, Don't Tell is unevenly applied, disproportionately affecting women.** While women make up only 14 percent of the armed forces, 30 percent of those who have been discharged under DADT are women.
- ▶ **Military leaders want DADT repealed.** Military leaders including current Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Admiral Michael Mullen, and National Security Advisor Jim Jones have all indicated their support for the repeal of DADT. Leaders who at one time supported DADT—including former Defense Secretary William Cohen, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs John Shalikashvili, and former Vice President Dick Cheney—now support the repeal of DADT.
- ▶ **The Military Readiness Enhancement Act is the right bill for this moment.** The Military Readiness Enhancement Act (MREA) replaces the discriminatory and unworkable DADT policy with a law preventing discrimination. MREA repeals the military's DADT law that prohibits service members from engaging in, or disclosing a propensity to engage in homosexual acts, makes it illegal to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation, and permits those discharged because of their sexual orientation under previous laws and policies to seek to re-enter the military without consideration of their previous separation.

The Military Readiness Enhancement Act (HR 1283/S 3065)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

What's the Problem with the Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT) Policy?

“Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue, Don't Harass” (DADT)—the current law prohibiting lesbians and gays from serving openly in the US Armed Forces—requires people to be dishonest about their personal lives or face the possibility of being fired.

Why would a Jewish organization care about this law?

In the book of Genesis in the Torah, we read that we are all made *B'tselem Elohim*, in the divine image of G-d. We find it morally reprehensible that our nation would deny basic rights to individuals on the basis of any immutable characteristic, including sexual orientation or gender identity.

What Would the Military Readiness Enhancement Act Actually Do?

The Military Readiness Enhancement Act (MREA) ends the discriminatory and dangerous DADT policy by repealing the current law that prohibits service members from either engaging in or disclosing a propensity to engage in homosexual acts, makes it illegal to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation, and permits those discharged because of their sexual orientation under previous laws and policies to seek to re-enter the military without consideration of their previous separation.

Wouldn't the Military Readiness Enhancement Act Put US Soldiers at Risk?

No, it is the DADT policy that hurts military readiness and national security while putting American soldiers fighting overseas at risk.

What Does the American Public Think of Don't Ask, Don't Tell?

The vast majority of Americans—including majorities of Republicans, Independents, and Democrats—recognize that this rule harms unit cohesion, military readiness, and recruitment and is codified discrimination.

What is the Current Status of the Bill?

MREA was introduced in the House by Rep. Ellen Tauscher (D-CA). Upon Rep. Tauscher's confirmation as Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, Rep. Patrick Murphy (D-PA) became the lead sponsor of the bill. Sen. Joseph Lieberman (I-CT) is the primary sponsor of the Senate version of MREA. On February 2, 2010, the Senate Armed Services Committee heard testimony on the Senate version. On March 3, 2010, hearings were held in the House Subcommittee on Military Personnel.