

House Memorial

A memorial to the Congress of the United States, urging Congress to adopt, and the President of the United States to sign into law, H.R. 1283, the Military Readiness Enhancement Act of 2009, or similar legislation, that institutes a policy of nondiscrimination based on sexual orientation with respect to service in the United States military and repeals the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy.

WHEREAS, the passage into law of the National Defense Authorization Act of 1994, Public Law 103-1601, instituted the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue, Don't Harass," policy within the United States military that is now commonly known and referred to as "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," and

WHEREAS, the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy has led to the discharge of a great number of lesbian and gay military servicemembers, thus ending their military careers and burdening them with a lifelong stigma, and

WHEREAS, the capacity of the Armed Forces of the United States to carry out its missions is hindered when competent and qualified individuals are involuntarily discharged from the military, and

WHEREAS, the Armed Forces of the United States have been forced to retain reservists and National Guard servicemembers on active duty past the length of their standard deployments in order to carry out its recent missions, and

WHEREAS, the ability of the United States Armed Forces to recruit and retain the best and brightest soldiers, sailors,

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29 airmen, and Marines is hindered by excluding a section of the  
30 population solely because of sexual orientation, and

31 WHEREAS, lesbian and gay servicemembers have served  
32 honorably in the military throughout the history of this nation  
33 and continue to serve with distinction on active duty, and

34 WHEREAS, these men and women have achieved military honors,  
35 decorations, and promotions to the highest ranks of their  
36 respective services for their valor and service to the people of  
37 the United States, and

38 WHEREAS, at least 24 other nations, including Great  
39 Britain, Australia, Canada, and Israel, allow open military  
40 service by gays and lesbians, and

41 WHEREAS, the Department of Homeland Security, the Federal  
42 Bureau of Investigation, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the  
43 National Security Agency, the Central Intelligence Agency, the  
44 Secret Service, and other federal departments handling national  
45 security allow their lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender  
46 personnel to serve openly, and

47 WHEREAS, there are at least 65,000 gay and lesbian service  
48 members on active military duty today and another 1 million gay  
49 and lesbian veterans who have served our nation proudly, and

50 WHEREAS, more than 13,000 servicemembers have been  
51 discharged under the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, including  
52 hundreds of servicemembers in critical occupations, such as  
53 counterintelligence experts and medical specialists, and

54 WHEREAS, according to a federal Government Accountability  
55 Office report, 323 language specialists have been discharged  
56 from military service under the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy,

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57 including 55 Arabic translators and nine Farsi translators, all  
58 of which are vitally important positions to intelligence  
59 gathering and are positions for which there is a critical  
60 shortage of qualified personnel, and

61 WHEREAS, it is estimated that American taxpayers have paid  
62 between \$250 million and \$1.2 billion to investigate, eliminate,  
63 and replace qualified and patriotic servicemembers who want to  
64 serve their country but are dismissed because of their sexual  
65 orientation under the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, and

66 WHEREAS, evidence from a study conducted by the Center for  
67 the Study Of Sexual Minorities in the Military suggests that the  
68 "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy increases the stress levels of  
69 gay troops, lowers their morale, impairs their ability to form  
70 trusting bonds with their peers, restricts their access to  
71 medical care, psychological services, and religious  
72 consultations, and limits their ability to advance  
73 professionally and their willingness to join and remain in  
74 military service, and

75 WHEREAS, every study authorized by the Department of  
76 Defense on the subject of the relationship between sexual  
77 orientation and participation in military service has shown that  
78 there is no correlation between sexual orientation and unit  
79 cohesion in the Armed Forces, and

80 WHEREAS, public opinion polls have found that the majority  
81 of American citizens support keeping trained and skilled openly  
82 gay and lesbian servicemembers in the military and repealing  
83 "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," and

84 WHEREAS, a 2006 study by the Michael D. Palm Center found  
 85 that nearly three in four troops say they are personally  
 86 comfortable in the presence of gays and lesbians, and

87 WHEREAS, more than 100 retired generals and admirals,  
 88 including the highest-ranking uniformed officer in the United  
 89 States military, have called for the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't  
 90 Tell," and

91 WHEREAS, the readiness of the United States military to  
 92 protect and defend our nation is severely compromised because of  
 93 the discriminatory "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy that is  
 94 arbitrarily enforced by commanders whose personal beliefs may  
 95 influence their disciplinary action, and

96 WHEREAS, discharges under the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"  
 97 policy are historically fewer when troop strength is low, as in  
 98 times of war, which indicates a tacit recognition by the  
 99 military that lesbian and gay servicemembers are fit for and  
 100 capable of military service, thus further illustrating the  
 101 arbitrary enforcement of the policy, and

102 WHEREAS, Florida is home to tens of thousands of military  
 103 personnel and their families, and

104 WHEREAS, according to a 2004 Urban Institute study, an  
 105 estimated 77,000 gay and lesbian veterans live in Florida, and

106 WHEREAS, military readiness is enhanced when every  
 107 qualified, capable American, regardless of sexual orientation,  
 108 is welcomed into our Armed Forces and their talents are utilized  
 109 in the best interests of our national security, NOW, THEREFORE,

110  
 111 Be It Resolved by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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113           That the Congress of the United States is urged to adopt,  
114 and the President of the United States is urged to sign into  
115 law, H.R. 1283, the Military Readiness Enhancement Act of 2009,  
116 or similar legislation, that institutes a policy of  
117 nondiscrimination based on sexual orientation with respect to  
118 service in the United States military and repeals the "Don't  
119 Ask, Don't Tell" policy.

120           BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be  
121 dispatched to the President of the United States, to the  
122 President of the United States Senate, to the Speaker of the  
123 United States House of Representatives, and to each member of  
124 the Florida delegation to the United States Congress.