

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, U.S. Representative Mike Quigley (D-IL) called for the repeal of the 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' policy, which currently mandates the military discharge of openly gay, lesbian, or bi-sexual service members as a violation of Title 10 of the U.S. Code.

"The 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' policy is not only morally repugnant, but as the recent dismissal of National Guard Lt. Dan Choi demonstrated, it's making us less safe as well." said Quigley. "I'm encouraged that President Obama's nominee for Secretary of the Army (Rep. John McHugh) agrees that this policy needs to be reviewed and changed, but we must take action sooner rather than later."

Quigley added that the repeal of the ban would not undermine military readiness, noting that, on the contrary, the Armed Forces has discharged 13,000 service members since 1994, including hundreds of mission-critical troops and Arabic and Farsi linguists in the last five years alone.

Congressman Quigley also announced that he has signed on as a co-sponsor of House Resolution 1283 – the Military Readiness Enhancement Act of 2009 (MREA). MREA will replace the current 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' policy, with a policy of non-discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation to any member of the Armed Forces or person seeking to become a member. The Act also authorizes the re-accession of otherwise qualified individuals who had been previously separated back into service.

"This is bigger than gay rights. It's about human rights, no matter what your race, gender, or sexual orientation," said Rep. Quigley. "There's something fundamentally wrong with encouraging citizens to serve their country, as long as they lie about who they are."

Quigley is a member of the LGBT Congressional Caucus and co-sponsored the Hate Crimes Bill as one of his first acts as a member of Congress. This will authorize the Department of Justice to investigate and prosecute certain bias-motivated crimes based on the victim's actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability.

An unswerving champion of issues important to the LGBT community, Quigley's call-to-action on 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' builds upon his previous work as Cook County Commissioner when he worked tirelessly, in conjunction with a coalition of LGBT advocates, to ensure that Cook County did not do business with groups that discriminate based on sexual orientation. Additionally, Quigley passed two groundbreaking ordinances that extended health benefits to gay and lesbian partners of County employees and created the Cook Country Domestic Partnership Registry, which allows domestic partners to more easily secure benefits for one another.

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