

WASHINGTON – Last night, during an hour of dedicated floor discussion regarding “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” Congressman Mike Quigley (D-IL) delivered the following remarks, putting a “human face” on how the military policy impacts real people, as well as the security of our country.

“Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” is a policy which currently mandates the military discharge of openly gay, lesbian, or bi-sexual service members.

Video of the speech is also [available here](#) .

"Thank you. I want to thank the Gentleman from Pennsylvania for his service, as well. Let me briefly try to put a human face on this. When you don't put a person on it you can imagine, it's hard to really understand the human cost with such a policy. I'll give you two:

First of all, Lee Reinhart. Four years after graduating high school and after spending time at both public and private universities, Lee Reinhart decided he had simply not found his calling. So, in September of 1995, Lee surprised his friends and family by joining the Navy. Lee served on board the USS Cowpens as an Operations Specialist, working his way up to becoming a 2nd class petty officer in the combat information center tracking both surface and air contacts. While serving, Lee earned several medals and ribbons, including the Navy Marine Corp Achievement Medal. Lee's tour of duty in the Navy was completed in August of 1999. After time in reserves and the events of September 11

th, 2001, Lee wanted to return to active duty, this time to make it a career. This time he chose the Coast Guard, but soon after joining Lee became a target and was being investigated.

Lee was given two choices: he could admit he was gay and be permitted to leave the military, or

he could stay and undergo an investigation with the same end result, discharge. The point of this story is obvious. Lee had completed a full enlistment in one branch and earned an honorable discharge, while serving in another branch the uneven and equitable implementation of Don't Ask Don't Tell ended his career. The implementation of Don't Ask Don't Tell is uneven and subjects individuals such as Lee to the whims and prejudices of individuals.

Secondly, Second Lieutenant Sandy Tsao. Like the President of the United States, our dear friend Sandy is a fellow former South Sider, this time from the Bridgeport neighborhood. Sunday February 8, 2009 marked the one year service anniversary of her active duty, full time service to her country. Shortly thereafter, she received an honorable discharge because of her orientation.

Ms. Tsao wrote a letter to the President of the United States. She writes: *"I am a Second Lieutenant currently serving in the U.S. Army, in addition to being an officer; I am a Christian, a woman and a Chinese-American. I am proud of all of these identities. Lastly, I am also a lesbian. On December 21, 2007, I was appointed as an army officer, in the oath of office I swore to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic. Unfortunately, I will not be able to fulfill this oath because the current policy regarding sexual orientation contradicts my values as a moral human being. Today is the Chinese New Year, I hope it will bring good fortune to you in your newly elected office. Today is also the day I inform my chain of command of who I am. One of the seven Army values is integrity, it means choosing to do right no matter what the consequences may be. As a Christian, this also means living an honest life. I cannot live up to these values unless my work place quote 'provides an environment free of unlawful discrimination and offense behavior.'"*

That is an excerpt from the US army equal opportunity branch.

"We have the best military in the world and I would like to continue to be part of it. My mother can tell you it is my dream to serve our country. I have fought and overcome many barriers to arrive at the point I am today. This is the only battle I fear I may lose. Even if it is too late for me I do hope Mr. President that you will help us win the war against prejudice so that future generations will continue to work together and fight for our freedoms, regardless of race, color, gender, religion, national origin or sexual orientation."

For 24-year-old Sandy Tsao, we are too late. But for many other gay and lesbian service members, our repeal may just be in time.

In my mind, having gone to Iraq, I looked at the brave men and women willing to make the

ultimate sacrifice for our country. Many of them were as young as my own children, and I'll tell you what I didn't see: I didn't see black or white, men or women, straight or gay, Democrats or Republicans.

I saw Americans.

I saw warriors.

Don't Ask Don't Tell is a policy so fundamentally hypocritical that it encourages citizens to put their lives on the line to serve a country built on freedom and democracy, as long as they lie about who they are.

Lastly, I am reminded, always at times like this, of what President Lincoln said at Gettysburg. Now it's been interpreted many ways, but I like to think the essence of what President Lincoln was getting to was this: 87 years ago we created a country based on certain principles, most important of which was that all of us are created equal. What he was saying at Gettysburg was — did we really mean it? Did we really mean *everyone*?

And I ask my colleagues to think about that, especially in the time of two wars, with storm clouds gathering over North Korea and Iran. Do we really mean it? Do we really mean it, today, that all of us are created equal? Thank you."