



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION OF CONGREGATIONS  
Washington Office for Advocacy  
(202) 393-2255 • socialjustice@uua.org • www.uua.org/socialjustice

## Issue Brief: Repeal “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”

*“We believe that no one should be fired on the basis of his or her sexual orientation, and this includes the military personnel who serve to uphold the American ideals of liberty and justice for all. ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ is a discriminatory and immoral policy which must be overturned.”*

-UUA President Rev. William G. Sinkford

### Introduction

"Don't Ask, Don't Tell" suggests that if Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender (BGLT) military personnel keep their sexual orientation a secret, the military will not investigate. In practice, however, this compromise has not resulted in less harassment and persecution of BGLT service members. While BGLT members of the military are barred from revealing their sexual orientation, investigations and discharges continue.

The Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations has passed two statements specifically pertaining to discrimination against lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons serving in the military. In 1993, the General Assembly passed a Resolution of Immediate Witness calling for lifting the ban prohibiting lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons from serving in the U.S. military. In 2007, the General Assembly reaffirmed this statement and passed an Action of Immediate Witness calling for the repeal of “Don't Ask, Don't Tell.”

### Current Situation

“Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell, Don’t Pursue, Don’t Harass” began in 1993. It was an attempt by President Clinton to end discrimination in the military but strong opposition led to the current policy as a compromise. Since 1994, over 11,000 people have been discharged from the military due to “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.” Of those, nearly 800 were specialists, including 323 linguists, of which 55 specialized in Arabic.

Under the current policy, service members can be investigated and discharged if they:

- make a statement that they are lesbian, gay or bisexual
- engage in sexual contact with someone of the same sex
- marry, or attempt to marry, someone of the same sex

Currently there are at least 65,000 lesbian, gay and bisexual Americans serving in the military and one million veterans. Studies done by the Pentagon have found that the U.S. military could lift the ban on lesbian, gay, bisexual people in the military with no harm to readiness. Taxpayers would also save money. A 2006 Blue Ribbon Commission report found that over \$360 million has been spent from 1994-2003 on enforcing “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.”

## Current Legislation

### **The Military Readiness Enhancement Act (H.R. 1246)**

The Military Readiness Enhancement Act (H.R. 1246) would repeal the current ban on military service by openly lesbian, gay and bisexual Americans, commonly referred to as “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.” It would replace the current law with new a provision prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation in the Armed Forces. It would also allow people who have been discharged for being gay to apply to rejoin the military. The Military Readiness Enhancement Act would not create a right to benefits for same-sex partners or spouses, because under current federal law such benefits would violate the federal Defense of Marriage Act.

It is immoral for an overextended and depleted military to throw away the contributions of brave and talented service members. A military operating under a discriminatory employment policy fails the soldiers whose sacrifices guarantee the American ideals of liberty and justice for all.

### Talking Points

- Discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity is unacceptable in a nation that prizes equality. If passed, the Military Readiness Enhancement Act would strengthen our nation's commitment to freedom and justice for all.
- It is immoral to deprive anyone of the means to feed, clothe, and care for their families if they are willing and able to work. This applies to BGLT families as much as any others.
- As a welcoming people of faith, we see firsthand the devastating effects the loss of a job can have on individuals, families and communities. Discrimination against BGLT people in the workplace is not benign; it hurts real families in our communities.
- Americans strongly support the freedom to serve for BGLT people. Polls routinely report 64% or more of Americans supporting BGLT people in the military.

### Contact Congress- Support the Military Readiness Enhancement Act

Members of Congress want to hear from their constituents about the issues that matter to them. Remember to identify yourself as a person of faith, parent, student, youth, etc., when you ask them to support the Military Readiness Enhancement Act.

- **Email:** Via the UUA Washington Office website [www.uua.org/socialjustice](http://www.uua.org/socialjustice)
- **Call:** The Capitol Switchboard at (202) 225-3121
- **Lobby:** Set up a lobby visit with your Senators and Representative in Washington, DC or in your district.

### Further Actions to Take

- Visit the UUA Washington Office website [www.uua.org/socialjustice](http://www.uua.org/socialjustice)
- Sign up for the UU Justice Action Network and receive email updates about BGLT issues

### Additional Resources

Service Members Legal Defense Network (SLDN) [www.sldn.org](http://www.sldn.org)  
Human Rights Campaign <http://www.hrc.org/>

**For more information on Repealing Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell please contact Grace Garner in the UUA Washington Office: [LA\\_BGLT@uua.org](mailto:LA_BGLT@uua.org) or (202) 393-2255 x 12**