



AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

April 22, 2010

The Honorable Robert M. Gates
Secretary
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Gates:

We are writing on behalf of the American Psychological Association (APA) to express our appreciation for the recent changes to the implementation of the Department of Defense (DoD) policy concerning homosexuality (U.S. Code, Title 10, Section 654).

APA has opposed discrimination in the military on the basis of sexual orientation for more than 20 years. Although the changes you announced do not alter the discrimination inherent in this personnel policy, they will serve to ameliorate some of the worst problems in its administration.

In particular, APA is very pleased that your policy changes include the explicit extension of Rule 513 of the Military Rules of Evidence (regarding psychotherapist-patient privilege) to homosexual conduct fact-finding inquiries or separation proceedings. As you know, APA first requested DoD to make this change in 2007 due to our concern that lesbian, gay, and bisexual service members need to feel safe to seek mental health services. We are highly gratified to see DoD adopt this policy change. We encourage you to ensure that this change is widely disseminated to military service members and their health care providers. Unless affected individuals know about the policy change, the expected benefits will not accrue. APA is also prepared to contribute to this effort by educating health care providers and the broader community about this important change.

Once again, we would like to express our appreciation for your efforts to ameliorate the negative impact of the current policy and to prepare for the implementation of its eventual repeal, which APA supports wholeheartedly. We also welcome the opportunity to provide relevant psychological research, or whatever other assistance might be helpful, to further your efforts.

Sincerely,

Carol D. Goodheart, Ed.D.
President

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