



AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

July 27, 2009

The Honorable Patrick Murphy
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Murphy:

I am writing on behalf of the 150,000 members of the American Psychological Association (APA) to express our strong support for your leadership and commitment to the *Military Readiness Enhancement Act of 2009* (H.R. 1283).

APA is the largest scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States and is the world's largest association of psychologists. Comprised of researchers, educators, clinicians, consultants, and students, APA works to advance psychology as a science, a profession, and as a means of promoting health, education and human welfare.

As you know, the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy perpetuates prejudice and discrimination against gay, lesbian, and bisexual military service members. Since 1993, almost 13,000 loyal personnel have been dishonorably discharged because of their sexual orientation. In addition, these mandatory discharges disproportionately affect female service members. Moreover, scholarly research has shown that eliminating the ban on service by openly gay, lesbian, and bisexual service members is unlikely to reduce military readiness or adversely affect unit cohesion.

The *Military Readiness Enhancement Act of 2009* represents a critical step to reducing discrimination in the military. It would also make an important contribution to the health and welfare of gay, lesbian, and bisexual military personnel, and to the effectiveness of the U.S. military in general.

Specifically, H.R. 1283 would repeal the current "Policy concerning Homosexuality in the Armed Forces" (10 U.S.C. § 654, also referred to as "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy), and thus pave the way for eliminating discrimination based on sexual orientation in the U.S. military, consistent with anti-discrimination policies concerning race, gender, and disability status.

Our association has a longstanding commitment to promoting the health and well-being of lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals, and to protecting them from discrimination.

This stance is reflected in APA's policy statement on *Sexual Orientation and Military Service* (please see attached). In this policy statement, APA reaffirmed its commitment to disseminating scientific knowledge to remove the stigma of mental disorders associated with gay, lesbian, and bisexual behavior and orientations. At the same time, the policy statement articulates APA's support for efforts that foster physical and mental health among lesbian, gay, and bisexual service members, as well as the military and our nation as a whole.

We have also enclosed a briefing sheet created by APA on this topic for your consideration. This document provides a comprehensive set of scientific references in support of eliminating the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy.

Thank you again for your leadership on this critical issue, and we look forward to working with you to secure passage of this vital legislation during the 111th Congress. Please contact Jutta Tobias, Ph.D., of our Government Relations Office at (202) 336-5668 or jtobias@apa.org, if you would like any additional information.

Sincerely,



Gwendolyn Puryear Keita, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Public Interest Directorate