



# Holding Lawmakers Accountable

## Senators Waiting to Hear from the Military on “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” Will Soon Have Their Wish

Crosby Burns and Jeff Krehely | November 2010

President Obama announced in this year’s State of the Union address that he was going to work with Congress to repeal “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” the law that prohibits openly gay men and women from serving in the military. The issue has been vigorously debated in Congress and the media since January. This public conversation has allowed elected officials to put their DADT repeal position on the record. Several U.S. senators have specifically said that their position hinges on what military leaders and the troops think about the issue.

The Pentagon will release findings from its nearly year-long study of DADT repeal on or before December 1, 2010. This means that the current Congress would still have time after the study comes out to hold a vote on DADT repeal that is informed by the Pentagon’s work.

Early reports suggest that most troops and their families are either supportive of allowing gay men and women to serve openly or simply have no opinion on the matter, and that military leaders can implement open service without any disruption to military readiness or effectiveness.

Senators who have said they are waiting to hear from the troops and military leaders before deciding on DADT repeal should be held to task once the report comes out. These lawmakers include:

**Sen. Scott Brown (R-MA):**

*It would be premature to act on a repeal of the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” law at this time. The Pentagon is still in the midst of its study of the matter, and its*

report is due in December. For some time now, I have been seeking the opinions and recommendations of service chiefs, commanders in the field, and, most importantly, our junior soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines. I believe we have a responsibility to the men and women of our armed forces to be thorough in our consideration of this issue and take their opinions seriously. I am keeping an open mind, but I do not support moving ahead until I am able to finish my review, the Pentagon completes its study, and we can be assured that a new policy can be implemented without jeopardizing the mission of our military.

**Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC):**

*I do not support the idea of repealing “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” before our military members and commanders complete their review.*

*Well, it’s my belief that, if the policy—you don’t have buy-in by the military, that’s a disservice to the people in the military. They should be included in this. I’m open-minded to what the military may suggest. But I can tell you, I’m not going to make policy based on a campaign rally. ... if this policy about “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” changes, it should be done based not on politics, but on reason.*

**Sen. Judd Gregg (R-NH):**

*I don’t support repealing it until the joint service chiefs have told us they think it’s good for the military. This is about war fighting and I listen to the joint service chiefs on that.*

**Mark Kirk (Republican senator-elect from Illinois):**

*I think we should wait for the Joint Chiefs of Staff to report as they are scheduled in December; this was actually the recommendation of Defense Secretary [Robert] Gates and the President.*

**Joe Manchin (Democratic senator-elect from West Virginia):**

*The governor doesn’t believe the rules should be changed until the battlefield commanders can certify it doesn’t hurt unit cohesion.*

**Sen. John McCain (R-AZ):**

*I would welcome a report done by the Joint Chiefs of Staff—based solely on military readiness, effectiveness, and needs, and not on politics—that would study the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy, that would consider the impact of its repeal on our armed services, and that would offer their best military advice on the right course of action.*

*I cannot over emphasize the importance of completing the comprehensive review prior to taking any legislative action.*

**Sen. Mark Pryor (D-AR):**

*Let’s let the military professionals work through their process. I’d hate to kind of short-circuit that with congressional action, so I’d rather let [the Pentagon review] occur before we start making policy here on “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell.”*

**Sen. Olympia Snowe (R-ME):**

*Moreover, as I have previously stated, given that the law implementing the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy has been in place for nearly 17 years, I agree that it is overdue for a thorough review. The question is, whether we should be voting on this issue before we have the benefit of the comprehensive review that President Obama’s Secretary of Defense ordered in March, to secure the input of our men and women in uniform during this time of war—as the Joint Chiefs of Staff from all of the services have requested prior to any vote. We should all have the opportunity to review that report which is to be completed on December 1, as we reevaluate this policy and the implementation of any new changes.*

**Sen. George Voinovich (R-OH):**

*“Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” is a controversial issue that needs to be debated on the Senate floor but I believe it would be logical to wait for the Department of Defense to issue its report on “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.” At this point there is no reason to rush to judgment for political expediency until we hear from our military leaders as to whether they think it is a good idea to change this policy. I will carefully study this determination when it is completed.*

**Sen. Jim Webb (D-VA):**

*I continue to believe that the survey of the members of our military, mandated by the Department of Defense in February, should be completed and assessed before the Congress moves forward on any legislative changes to the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy.*

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