

Congressman Rothman: Repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" Makes America S

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Washington, DC -- Today, Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ), a member of the House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee, joined with millions of Americans to celebrate the official repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." Congressman Rothman released the following statement:

Today, we are one step closer to our nation's promise of liberty and justice for all people. This repeal has ensured that our country's laws are applied equally and that gay, lesbian, and bisexual service members will no longer have to lie about who they are in order to serve their country. It will also enhance our national security.

As a member of the House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee, I believe that one of Congress's most important jobs is to ensure that the U.S. armed forces remain the best equipped, best prepared, and most powerful in the world. By sending home more than 13,500 motivated and qualified patriotic service members willing and fit to serve this country since 1994, "Don't Ask Don't Tell" has weakened our military. I was privileged to have had the opportunity to vote in favor of this repeal.

Today, all of those in our society who are ready, able, and willing to serve in the U.S. military will be guaranteed their right to do so. The U.S. Constitution, specifically the 14th Amendment, requires the government to apply our laws equally. That is why, under this repeal, only negative conduct, not one's sexual orientation, will be grounds for dismissal from our nation's military. Investing many millions of dollars to train these individuals and then dismissing them, in the absence of bad conduct, has wasted many millions of precious taxpayer dollars and compromised our national security.

As we celebrate this major milestone, many formerly discharged service members will reenter the armed services to serve alongside their friends and military family. We must ensure that the U.S. military treats all of our service members equally. Gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals must have access to the same rights as their heterosexual peers. Anything less is unacceptable.

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