

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**IN MESSAGE TO PENTAGON LEADERSHIP,  
GILLIBRAND, FORMER JOINT CHIEFS  
CHAIRMAN SAY IT'S TIME TO REPEAL "DON'T  
ASK DON'T TELL"**

***Top Military Leader Joins Broad, Growing Support To  
End Unjust, Harmful Policy***

*Washington, D.C.* – Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General John Shalikashvili today joined U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand's call for action to finally end "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" by issuing the following statement urging top leadership at the Department of Defense to move forward on repealing the policy:

**STATEMENT FROM GEN. SHALIKASHVILI:**

*"Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts about the Policy Concerning Homosexuality in the Armed Forces. When I was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, my support of the current policy was based on my belief that implementing a change in the rules would have been too burdensome for our troops and commanders at the time.*

*"The concern among many at that time, was that letting people who were openly gay serve would lower morale, harm recruitment and undermine unit cohesion. "Don't ask, don't tell" was seen as a useful measure that allowed time to pass while our culture continued to evolve. The*

*question before us now is whether enough time has gone by to give this policy serious reconsideration. I believe that it has.*

*“Recently, Army Secretary John McHugh said that “The Army has a big history of taking on similar issues [with] ...predictions of doom and gloom that did not play out.” His conclusion echoes substantial scholarly and official military research which finds that allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly would not jeopardize readiness.*

*“Studies have shown that three-quarters of service members say they are personally comfortable around gays and lesbians. Two-thirds say they already know or suspect gay people in their units. This raises important questions about the assertion that openly gay service would impair the military. In fact, it shows that gays and lesbians in the military have already been accepted by the average soldier.*

*“Additionally, at least twenty-five foreign militaries now let gays serve openly, including our closest ally, Britain. Although we lead rather than follow these militaries, there is no evidence suggesting that our troops cannot effectively carry out the same policy change as those nations did.*

*“In 2008, a bi-partisan panel of retired General and Flag officers carefully reviewed this matter for a year and concluded that repeal would not pose a risk to the military's high standards of morale, discipline, cohesion, recruitment, or retention. Interestingly, an increasing number of active-duty officers who have reviewed “don't ask, don't tell” indicate that the policy, not the presence of gays, is detrimental to the armed forces' need for skilled personnel who are able to serve without compromising*

*their integrity and, by extension, that of the armed forces as a whole.*

*“As a nation built on the principal of equality, we should recognize and welcome change that will build a stronger more cohesive military. It is time to repeal “don’t ask, don’t tell” and allow our military leaders to create policy that holds our service members to a single standard of conduct and discipline.”*

**Senator Gillibrand** said, “The military’s ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ policy is an unjust, outdated and harmful rule that violates the civil rights of some of our bravest, most heroic men and women. I’ve been working with my colleagues in Congress and other leaders to overturn this wasteful and destructive policy. I am hopeful that President Obama will make this a top priority.”

**Aaron Belkin, Director of the Palm Center** said, “General Shalikashvili has answered the lingering question of when to repeal ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.’ The General says now. As one of only 17 people to hold the position of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs his statement is saying that not only is now the time to repeal this law, but that it will make our military stronger. This is an endorsement of the President’s goals and a signal to the Pentagon – it is time for repeal.”

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