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CONGRESS PRESSURES PENTAGON ON EVE OF GAYS IN THE MILITARY DEBATE
96 offices seek to hold Obama Administration accountable for gay discharges

SANTA BARBARA, CA, December 22, 2009 - Today, ninety-six members of Congress sent a [letter to Defense Secretary Robert Gates](#) requesting all 2009 “don't ask, don't tell” discharge data in an effort to ready their arguments for the impending 2010 debate on the gay ban. The letter was authored by [Congressman Jim Moran](#) (D-VA), a member of the House Defense Appropriations subcommittee and was signed by Rep. Patrick Murphy (D-PA), lead sponsor of the bill to repeal “don't ask, don't tell.” Members are requesting up-to-date information on the number of service members discharged in 2009 under the Obama Administration as well as information about their job specialties, years of service and branch in which they served.

This request comes as supporters of repeal in Congress are collecting information to prepare for the upcoming House and Senate debate on repeal in 2010. On December 2nd Congressman Alcee Hastings (D-FL) introduced legislation, which currently has 32 co-sponsors, to allow openly gay service members to testify in upcoming hearings without being discharged under “don't ask, don't tell.” Hearings are expected in the Senate in January or February and in the House in March.

Palm Center Director Aaron Belkin stated, "It's clear that some in Washington are looking for ways to avoid discussing DADT in 2010. This letter from 96 Congressional offices keeps the pressure on the White House, Pentagon and Congress by illustrating the costs of discrimination with concrete data."

In 2001, there were 1,273 discharges under “don't ask, don't tell” and in 2008 there were 633, the third lowest number of discharges since the law took effect. The letter from Congressman Moran also requests that the Pentagon provide monthly updates on “don't ask, don't tell” discharges in 2010 to inform debates over repeal in the House and Senate.

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The Palm Center is a think tank at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Since 1998, the Center has been a leader in commissioning and disseminating research in the areas of gender, sexuality, and the military. For more information visit www.palmcenter.ucsb.edu.