



Hoyer Remarks at Symposium on Transgender Military Service

For Immediate Release:

July 13, 2016

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WASHINGTON, DC – House Democratic Whip Steny H. Hoyer (MD) delivered remarks today at a symposium on transgender military service with Under Secretary of Defense Peter Levine and Congressman Adam Smith (WA-09). Whip Hoyer was introduced by Lt. Col. Victor Valenzuela, a transgender service member. Below are his remarks prepared for delivery:

“Thank you, Colonel. Your story is both powerful and inspirational.

“For anyone here who hasn’t heard him talk about his transition and the challenges he and his family faced while transitioning in the military, I urge you to speak to him and listen to what he has to say.

“I’m honored to be part of today’s symposium, and I was proud to call on the Pentagon to end the ban on transgender Americans serving openly.

“In 2010, as Majority Leader, I brought the bill to the floor that ended the discriminatory ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ policy.

“Ending the ban on open transgender service members builds on that progress and will make our armed forces more reflective of the values for which our troops risk their lives.

“No qualified candidate ought to be denied the opportunity to serve his or her country simply because of sexual orientation or gender identity.

“Allowing transgender Americans to serve openly strengthens our military.

“We need transgender service members who are talented and driven and experienced to help us meet the national security challenges of the twenty-first century.

“I applaud the announcement by Secretary Carter that the Pentagon’s new inclusive policy will soon be implemented.

“That implementation must move forward expediently.

“I want to thank all the groups participating in today’s symposium, which were instrumental in achieving this victory for equality.

“I look forward to continuing our work together to keep breaking down barriers and making sure that our military remains the best in the world and one that truly reflects what is best about our nation.”