

# Military leaders: 'Don't Ask' ban counterproductive

Former top brass call for repeal  
by Matt Comer . Q-Notes staff

SANTA BARBARA, Calif. — A new report from the University of California-Santa Barbara's Michael D. Palm Center, led by a team of retired senior flag and general officers from the U.S. military, has concluded that the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" ban on openly gay service members is counterproductive and should end. The report marks the first time a Marine Corps general has ever called publicly for an end to the gay ban.

"I believe this should have been done much earlier," said Brigadier General Hugh Aitken, USMC (Ret.), one of the authors of the report.

The report makes 10 findings and four recommendations, including that the policy prevents some gay troops from performing their duties; that gays already serve openly; that tolerance of homosexuality in the military has grown dramatically; and that lifting the ban is "unlikely to pose any significant risk to morale, good order, discipline, or cohesion."

General John Shalikashvili, the former Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who previously favored the gay ban but reversed course last year, endorsed the officers' new

study, calling it "one of the most comprehensive evaluations of the issue of gays in the military since the Rand study 15 years ago."

The study was based on discussions the senior flag and general officers held with

More Support for Allowing Gays to Serve Openly in the Military					
	1994		2006		Change Favor
	Fav	Opp	Fav	Opp	
Total	52	45	60	32	+8
Men	44	54	55	37	+11
Women	59	37	66	26	+7
18-29	56	43	72	23	+16
30-49	56	42	62	30	+6
50-64	47	50	59	35	+12
65+	41	50	47	39	+6
College grad	61	38	71	21	+10
Some college	58	40	69	27	+11
HS grad or less	46	50	50	40	+4
Northeast	62	36	66	27	+4
Midwest	53	43	61	32	+8
South	42	55	58	35	+16
West	56	41	61	29	+5
Republicans	39	60	46	46	+7
Conservative	30	69	36	58	+8
Moderate/Liberal	54	45	62	29	+8
Democrats	60	36	70	23	+10
Conserv./Mod	57	39	64	29	+7
Liberal	71	27	85	9	+14
Independent	55	42	66	30	+5
Protestant	45	52	53	38	+8
White evangelical	32	66	43	47	+11
White mainline	55	42	63	30	+8
Catholic	58	39	67	26	+9
White, non-Hisp	58	39	66	29	+8
Secular	72	26	74	22	+2

expert panels in Washington, D.C. over the past year. The group heard from senior and enlisted military members, scholarly experts and government officials.

Prominent opponents of letting open gays serve in the military were also invited to testify.

Aaron Belkin, director of the Palm Center, said the new report could bolster recent momentum in Congress to change the

policy. "Many lawmakers want to untie the military's hands on this policy," Belkin said, "and today's report will likely add

pressure on Congress to act."

Results from a mid-March 2006 poll from the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press shows that public acceptance of LGBT people has grown, including views on "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

Among the results, the poll showed that between 1994 and 2006, acceptance of openly gay service members rose eight percentage points — 60 percent of Americans support allowing open gays in the military, compared with only 52 percent in 1994.

The greatest change in views was among poll participants in the South. In 1994, only 42 percent of Southerners favored openly gay service. In 2006, 58 percent supported open service.

The Pew Research poll was conducted among 1,405 adults from March 8-12, 2006.

One day after the release of the Palm Center's report, 52 retired U.S. generals and admirals signed a statement supporting the repeal of the discriminatory U.S. law.

The statement read, in part, "We respectfully urge Congress to repeal the 'don't ask, don't tell' policy. Those of us signing this letter have dedicated our lives to defending the rights of our citizens to believe whatever they

wish. As General Colin Powell, Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs said when the 'don't ask, don't tell' policy was enacted, it is not the place of the military or those in senior leadership to make moral judgments...

"As is the case in Britain, Israel, and other nations which allow gays and lesbians to serve openly, our service members are professionals who are able to work together effectively despite differences in race, gender, religion, and sexuality. Such collaboration reflects the strength and the best traditions of our democracy." ▀

info: [www.palmcenter.org](http://www.palmcenter.org)

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