

First Congressional Hearing on DADT in 15 Years Held

July 23, 2008 – Zachary Violette

The U.S. House of Representatives on Wednesday, July 23, held the first hearing since 1993 on the “Don’t ask, don’t tell” policy, which prohibits lesbian, gay and bisexual people from serving openly in the military.

The House Military Personnel Subcommittee hearing comes on the heels of a new Washington Post/ABC News poll showing an overwhelming 75 percent of Americans support allowing openly gay and lesbian Americans to serve. The poll also shows support for repeal among Republicans has doubled from 32 percent to 64 percent in the last 15 years.

“Competence, ability, dedication and commitment to country should dictate one’s eligibility for military service-not sexual orientation. What matters is a person’s conduct in service to their country,” said Congressman Christopher Shays (R-CT), the lead Republican cosponsor of legislation to end “Don’t ask, don’t tell”. “I also do not believe an individual’s sexual orientation has any bearing on his or her ability to act in a professional manner consistent with the requirements and regulations of our Armed Services.”

The House Military Personnel Subcommittee hearing comes on the heels of a new Washington Post/ABC News poll showing an overwhelming 75 percent of Americans support allowing openly gay and lesbian Americans to serve. The poll also shows support for repeal among Republicans has doubled from 32 percent to 64 percent in the last 15 years.

“Competence, ability, dedication and commitment to country should dictate one’s eligibility for military service-not sexual orientation. What matters is a person’s conduct in service to their country,” said Congressman Christopher Shays (R-CT), the lead Republican cosponsor of legislation to end “Don’t ask, don’t tell”. “I also do not believe an individual’s sexual orientation has any bearing on his or her ability to act in a professional manner consistent with the requirements and regulations of our Armed Services.”

More than 12,000 military personnel have been discharged under “Don’t ask, don’t tell.” ““Don’t ask, don’t tell’ is harming our nation’s ability to fight the global war on terror,” said Patrick Sammon, president of the Log Cabin Republicans. “It is time to revisit this issue and put the security of our armed forces and our country above politics.”

A coalition of groups are lobbying for the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.” Headed by the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, other coalition partners include the **National Gay and Lesbian Task Force**, Log Cabin Republicans, Human Rights Campaign, Stonewall Democrats, and Parents & Friends of Lesbians and Gays.

“This categorical rejection of our country’s brave and trustworthy Americans and the continued squandering of their contributions must end,” said Rea Carey, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Action Fund executive director.

Sens. Barack Obama and John McCain take vastly different positions on the Military Readiness Enhancement Act. Barack Obama supports the passage of legislation that would repeal the current ban. John McCain strongly supports the ban and opposes Congress revisiting the issue.