DADT Repeal and HIV

March 10, 2011 By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.

As a gay former Marine, I obviously support repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (DADT). However, I'm reserving my celebration until full implementation of DADT repeal, which should happen sometime in 2011.

For LGBTs in the military, there are still a few obstacles to overcome until full implementation. And many obstacles will remain even when full implementation is a reality. A recent article in The Daily Beast does a good job of pointing them out.

The most obvious obstacle is that DADT remains in effect until 60 days after the president, the secretary of defense and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff certify that the Department of Defense is prepared to implement repeal.

So, although repeal is coming, LGBTs in the military can still technically be discharged if they came out. That sucks for now, but at least that will be done with soon enough.

Military-wide training on DADT repeal is currently underway. The Daily Beast interviewed several LGBTs in the military associated with OutServe, a network of active-duty LGBT military personnel, about their experiences so far with the training. Most seemed encouraged by it, but they also were reminded of the inequalities yet to be resolved.

Their concerns fell into two camps: 1) Grievances about alleged discrimination will be handled through the chain of command, not the Military Equal Opportunity office, which handles such things for women and people of color. 2) The Defense of Marriage Act is being used as an excuse to not extend benefits to same-sex partners of LGBTs in the military.

And then there was this concern:

James, also with the Air Force, has served in Iraq and is currently overseas. He says ... "When they talked about medical readiness and HIV it made me think that all straight people who go through the training will think we

all have it." OutServe's Smith agrees that "it's pretty demeaning to service members to say they have to 'train' about health and HIV with repeal of DADT. Instead they should say 'it's a false stereotype, get it out of your head.'"

It's not clear from the article what exactly is being taught about HIV during these trainings. However, OutServe does have a link to training information for Navy and Marine Corps commanders that includes the following tidbit about HIV:

Will repeal of DADT have health implications for the Marine Corps?

No. The Navy Surgeon General conducted research and found that there would be no increase in Marine or Sailor health risk. Existing policies and procedures for HIV screening and testing, management of HIV-positive personnel, and management of the military blood supply will continue to be effective following a repeal of the law. The Navy Surgeon General has examined this issue and determined there would be no increased risk.

It's good to know that military commanders are apparently being told the facts about HIV, but the question remains about why HIV is part of the training on DADT repeal.

The answer reveals itself in an article from last year at LGBT POV about a campaign by the anti-LGBT Family Research Council against DADT repeal. Among the reasons they cite against DADT repeal was the

supposed threat of increased HIV rates in the military as a result.

To the extent that HIV was made into a reason not to repeal DADT, it’s appropriate to address fears related to HIV in the training for DADT repeal. That said, it’s also appropriate for the military to address the stereotype that all gay men have HIV. I sincerely hope they do address it.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

http://beta.docker.poz.com/blog/dadt-repeal-and-hiv