



Legislation Text

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Honoring the anniversary of the enactment of the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” and the honorable service of countless LGBTQ+ veterans, and urging all veterans discharged due to this discriminatory policy to seek an upgraded discharge, enabling LGBTQ+ veterans and their families to enjoy all the benefits they have earned.

WHEREAS, “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” was a policy that forced LGBTQ+ service members to conceal their sexual orientation to serve in the military. While hundreds of thousands of LGBTQ+ Americans have served and sacrificed as part of the United States military, dating back to the Revolutionary War, they endured discrimination and unfair punishment. Under “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” any member of the Armed Forces that was identified or identified themselves as LGBTQ+ either through actions or words, was subject to investigation and discharge. In the 18-year span that “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” served as official policy, over 13,000 service members were discharged; and

WHEREAS, The Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell Repeal Act was passed by Congress, signed by President Barack Obama, and the certified to comply with Department of Defense recommendations and standards 60 days later, on September 20, 2011; and

WHEREAS, Even after repeal, this policy had damaging and lasting effects that continue to affect LGBTQ+ veterans and their families to this day. Many service members who were discharged under “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” were given “bad paper” discharges, which is anything less than honorable. Any discharge status less than honorable prevents veterans and their families from accessing benefits, including, but not limited to, VA Medical Facilities, VA Home Loan Guarantees and the GI Bill; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense has welcomed service members who were discharged under “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” to apply to upgrade their official record, to remove references to sexual orientation and qualify for more benefits. In 2023, the Biden Administration announced that the military would be proactively reviewing the military records of veterans whose records indicate their administrative separation was the result of their sexual orientation and who received a less than honorable conditions discharge; and

WHEREAS, While barriers to rectifying the injustices endured by LGBTQ+ service members under “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” persist, 83% of cases for service members who have sought to have their records reviewed have seen some kind of relief, greatly improving the lives of LGTBQ+ veterans and their families; and

WHEREAS, We must continue to fight for equity for all LGBTQ+ people, including those who made countless sacrifices to serve their country and were dismissed due to their sexual orientation or identity; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby honor the anniversary of the repeal of the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy and urge all veterans discharged due to this discriminatory policy to seek an upgraded discharge, enabling LGBTQ+ veterans and their families to enjoy all the benefits which they have earned.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to MaCherie Dunbar to recognize her continued advocacy for LGBTQ+ Veterans and as evidence of the sincere sentiments of this legislative body.