

Do ask, do tell

Business



Introduction The Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT) refers to an official US policy regarding gay people serving in the United States military that was enacted during the period between December 21, 1993 and September 20, 2011 (Belkin 15). The DADT policy barred military personnel from engaging in discriminatory acts or harassing service members who had not disclosed their homosexuality. In addition, the DADT policy prevented openly bisexual, lesbian, and gay individuals from serving in the US military on grounds that their presence in the military would result in an unacceptable risk with respect to high levels of unique cohesion, discipline, good order and morale, which are considered the key determinants of military capability (Crandall 21). In 2010, the Congress passed a bill aimed at repealing the DADT, which openly allowed bisexuals, lesbian, and gay individuals to serve in the US military. According to Crandall (23), the developments in military integration have taken place not because of the landmark judicial decisions.

Instead, they have occurred because of practical, incidental, and attitudinal changes observed especially among senior government officials as well as in the society in general. This paper argues that the repeal of the DADT policy was necessary. In this regard, this paper argues for the repeal of the DADT on three accounts: rejecting underlying justifications for DADT, focus on changing public opinion, and practical considerations. Rejecting the Underlying Justifications for DADT Huffman and Schultz (52) point out that in the recent years, fundamental justifications for the DADT policy have faced outright rejection as well as increasing suspicion. According to Huffman and Schultz (56), there is increasing evidence gathered from integration initiatives implemented by foreign militaries, surveys conducted among the

United States military personnel as well studies undertaken by the Department of Defence, which validates the assertion that presence of gay persons in the military is not damaging to the armed forces.

For instance, a recent study undertaken by the DoD in 2010 under the Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, gave credibility to the assertion that homosexuals are not detrimental to the military after all. In this study, the DoD took into consideration the impact of lifting the DADT on morale, discipline, good order, effectiveness, and unit cohesion (Crandall 26). Most importantly, DoD researchers incorporated a survey that pointed out considerable differences among the respondents, who held the view that they had served with homosexual personnel and those who held the view that they had not. Researchers concluded that the generalized perceptions of homosexual military personnel that resulted in fear that openly serving homosexuals could erode the unit discipline, good order, morale, and cohesion. In addition, DoD researchers concluded that the overall risk of openly serving homosexuals to the effectiveness of the military was relatively low.

While citing the capability of the US military to adjust to prior integration efforts of African-Americans and women, Crandall (30) argues that the US military is capable to adjust its structures to accommodate the entry of openly serving homosexuals, just like it has accommodated other entries in the past. Te Changing Public Opinion Regarding Openly Serving Homosexuals in the Armed Forces Apart from the shift in opinions within the Department of Defence, Crandall (33) shows that there was a substantial shift in public opinion that was leaned towards the repealing of the DADT <https://assignbuster.com/do-ask-do-tell/>

policy. When DADT was enacted in 2003, Crandall (35) points out that only 38 percent of surveyed US citizens believed that homosexuality is an acceptable choice of lifestyle. During 2009, this percentage had risen to 57 percent. In addition, 89 percent of the surveyed US citizens were of the view that homosexuals must have equal rights with respect to job opportunities. It is evident that societal outlook towards homosexuality has changed.

However, the proponents of DADT defended the policy on the account that the US military was an ideal place to conduct social experimentation. This reasoning can be discarded based on the findings reported by the DoD studies that reveal that the integration of gays in the armed forces is not an instance of social experimentation. While taking this issue into consideration, the DOD placed special emphasis on personnel experience during racial integration. For instance, in 1954, the US military was already over 95 percent integrated. During the same year, the USSupremeCourt made a ruling on the case of Brown v.

Board of Education, which Crandall (40) considers was an attempt to begin racial integration in the public system. In this regard, Crandall (40) points out that the Armed Forces acted as a platform for social experimentation for the large society. Perhaps, lifting the DADT would pave way for other civilian workplaces to adopt similar measures. Practical Considerations With regard to practical considerations underpinning the repeal of the DADT policy, Crandall (40) highlights three factors, which include realities of war, judicial scrutiny, and political will. Regarding the realities associated with war, Crandall (42) points out that the barring of homosexuals from serving in the US military has a long history. However, formal bans associated with <https://assignbuster.com/do-ask-do-tell/>

homosexual service have frequently appeared to be less formal in the wake of compelling operational needs by the Armed Forces.

McFeeley (100) argues that for a long time regulations and their associated rationale were primarily designed in accordance with the requirements of the time. For instance, when the military required men, regulations were adopted to allow the armed forces retain “reclaimable” gays (McFeeley 101). There are several instances where homosexuality-related dismissals were delayed, especially when the personnel was needed by the military. In addition, lesbians and gays facing court trials have receiving orders to serve, albeit at their own risks. This was the case when staffing needs of the military were in dire need of military personnel to support Iraqi Freedom and Operations Enduring.

Reports following the September 11 attacks point out that the US military permitted an increasing number of service men and women identified as homosexuals to remain in the forces because of the need for the specific expertise of the troops. McFeeley (102) argues that if homosexuals were indeed detrimental to unit effectiveness and cohesion, it made no sense that DoD would place homosexuals to serve in active combat. Regarding the political will, Crandall (40) asserts that Bill Clinton as well as Barack Obama used the repeal of DADT as a campaign platform. After winning the 2008 election, many Americans hoped that President Obama will fulfill his promise of lifting the DADT. However, in what can be perceived as a politically savvy strategy, Obama avoided an early confrontation involving the military.

Whereas he was a fierce advocate for lifting the bans associated with DADT, President Obama acknowledged the need to get support both from Congress

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and the military to repeal the DADT and worked through 2009 to 2010 to get this support.

This saw President Obama ordering the DoD study mentioned in 2010. It is apparent that President Obama first sought the support of the military and the Congress, especially by ensuring that the DoD supported the repeal of the DADT policy (Crandall 45). Regarding judicial scrutiny, Crandall (45) points out that several suits have been filed to question the constitutionality of the DADT policy. Despite the fact that DADT policy withstood scrutiny for 17 years, during October 12, 2010, a ruling by a federal district judge in the state of California passed a ruling that DADT was unconstitutional and instructed the military to desist from its further enforcement. After 8 days following the ruling by the federal district judge, the Ninth Circuit upheld the ruling against the armed forces enforcement of the DADT policy.

In addition, the US Supreme Court upheld this ruling in November 2010. However, by this time, there was a momentous wave leaning towards the repeal of the DADT. As Belkin (20) explains, politicians who wished to continue supporting the DADT policy had to pay a high political price by opposing the views of about 70% of US citizens. From this observation, Belkin (21) argues that it is evident that the repeal of the DADT was an idea the time of which had come and was inevitable. In line with this view, Belkin (22) points out that new developments regarding military integration imply that the time is ripe to revise the policy regarding the inclusion of homosexuals in the armed forces.

It is imperative for DoD to repeal combat exclusion policies, such as DADT, in order to have a level playing field to accommodate all qualified service members regardless of their sexual orientation. Conclusion From the discussion, it is evident that repealing of the DADT policy cannot be attributed to any single development. Rather, the demise of the DADT policy can be attributed to a combination of factors, such as rejection of justifications of the policy, political determination, practical concerns, changing societal attitudes regarding homosexuality, and judicial scrutiny. In addition, the repeal for the DADT policy can be justified on accounts that there is the need for the DoD to abolish exclusion policies, especially those that have been affirmed to have little impact on unit effectiveness and cohesion such as the DADT. This will play an instrumental role in creating a level playground that will facilitate recruitment and inclusion of qualified service members in the US military. Repealing of DADT policy represents a significant victory for the advocates of a truly integrated US military.

It is undeniable that repealing of the policy will result in homosexuals openly serving in the military. In addition, the repeal of the DADT will also lay the framework for the abolishment of other exclusion policies such as excluding women from combat operations.