



## **Position Statement to Restore Honor to Service Members Act (S. 1776 and H.R. 3068)**

The "Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue" (DADT) policy governing gay, lesbian, and bisexual members of the United States military ended on September 20, 2011; otherwise qualified service members can no longer be involuntarily separated, discharged or denied reenlistment or continuation of service just for being transgender as of June 30, 2016. The Department of Defense has now ended institutionalized discrimination against LGBTQ service members.

Prior to DADT, an estimated 100,000 service members were discharged from the military because of their sexual orientation between the end of the Second World War and DADT. Many of those forced out prior to DADT were given discharge statuses of "other than honorable," "dishonorable," or "general discharge." As a consequence, these service members may be disqualified from accessing benefits that they earned and are entitled to, such as G.I. Bill tuition assistance, retirement benefits, awards and ribbons, and veterans' health care.

After 1993, under DADT, service members were discharged with an "honorable" designation, but often with the narrative reason for their discharge reading "Homosexual Conduct," "Homosexual Act," or "Homosexual Marriage." Having this information on discharge paperwork put these members at risk of discrimination in employment and housing, as well as threatening their privacy.

The psychological, economic, and social costs to LGBTQ service members of these discriminatory policies has been profound and are well documented in scientific research and personal narratives. William C. Menninger, past president of the American Psychoanalytic Association, who served as the Director of the Psychiatry Consultants Division for the [Surgeon General of the United States Army](#) from 1944 to 1946, tried to persuade the military to issue honorable discharges to gay service members once psychiatrists realized the impact of less than honorable discharge. Ironically, medicine, psychiatry, and psychology played an important role in shaping the military's reactions to homosexuality in the first half of the 20th century, but military policy took many years to change to reflect contemporary psychological and psychiatric thinking.

As psychoanalysts, we understand that perspectives and culture have changed significantly over the past decades, but from where we stand today we can only view these prior policies as discriminatory and as a form of sexual violence. Many LGBTQ service members were subjected to public and long-lasting humiliation, resulting in lingering trauma. In addition, many who would have served their country never had the chance to do so, for fear of being rejected or receiving less than honorable discharges.

Service members can apply to have their discharges upgraded, however the process is long, complex, expensive and puts the burden on the service member who was treated unjustly. The American Psychoanalytic Association calls for the restoration of all financial and healthcare benefits, awards and medals to service members discharged for sexual orientation.

Consistent with our position, we support the Restore Honor to Service Members Act introduced in the United States Senate (S.1776) and the House of Representatives (H.R. 3068). This bill would:

- Ensure that service members who were discharged for no reason other than their sexual orientation always have an opportunity to have their records corrected to reflect their honorable service.
- Require the review boards of the military services to establish a timely, consistent, and transparent process for reviewing the records of service members claiming to have been discharged solely because of their sexual orientation.
- Simplify the paperwork requirement necessary for service members to initiate a review in an effort to make the process for corrective action achievable for all. In particular, the lack of documentation cannot be used as the basis for denying a review and it would remove the onus from the service member and place it on the Department of Defense to find and produce relevant documentation.
- Require the historians of each of the military services to review the facts and circumstances of the estimated 100,000 service members discharged for their sexual orientation prior to the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

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