



# Dems, Pentagon officials, advoc celebrate end of transgender ba

BY REBECCA KHEEL - 07/13/16 05:48 PM EDT

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The yearlong implementation period for lifting the military's ban on transgender troops will provide time to work through any issues yet to be addressed, the Pentagon's personnel chief said Wednesday.

"There's unique issues to the military, which we needed to work through and to address," Peter Levine, the Pentagon's acting undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness, said of the working group process. "I think we've worked through many of them. We will continue to work through others over the course of the next year, as we work to implement this policy."

Levine was part of a slew of Pentagon officials, Democratic leaders, transgender troops and advocacy groups that gathered Wednesday to celebrate the Pentagon's recent [lifting of the ban](#) on transgender troops.

Republicans have accused the Pentagon of putting a political priority ahead of military needs, and say there are unanswered questions to

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grapple with, such as how transgender troops seeking medical treatment will affect readiness.

The participants in Wednesday's symposium, hosted by the Palm Center think tank, lined up one by one to rebut that, saying research and past experience on repealing "don't ask, don't tell" show such concerns are inflated.

On June 30, Defense Secretary Ash Carter announced that effective immediately, transgender troops are allowed to serve openly in the military.

He also outlined a yearlong implementation period. For example, it will be another three months until transgender troops have access to medically necessary care and can begin changing their gender in the Pentagon's personnel system. And transgender recruits won't be able to enlist until the end of the yearlong period.

The Pentagon will issue guidance during the period that will answer outstanding questions such as how the rank and file will be trained on the new policy.

During his announcement, [Carter was confident](#) that implementation will go smoothly.

"I am 100 percent confident in the ability of our military leaders and all our men and women in uniform to implement these changes in a manner that both protects the readiness of the force, and also upholds values cherished by the military: honor, trust and judging every individual on their merits," he said.

None of Wednesday's speakers disagreed, and they urged the process to continue apace.

"That implementation must move forward expeditiously," House Minority Whip Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) said. "Dragging our feet will not be a productive exercise."

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) agreed, saying she hopes the military policy will be a model for the rest of the country, as transgender rights have become a hot-button issue.

"The military, I have to give them credit, for being leaders in many respects," Pelosi said. "Leaders in integration of the forces under the leadership of President Truman so many decades ago. Leaders in child care at military bases when other places were slow to recognize the full needs of families. Leaders in lifting 'don't ask, don't tell,' very important that the general leadership of our military were part of that decision. And now in the military, the trans ban, that being lifted. Hopefully that will be a model to the rest of the country to show respect."

Levine provided a little new insight into the process of lifting the ban. For example, he said he met personally with all the stakeholders at the Pentagon including the service chief, vice chiefs and surgeons general.

Levine also said Carter was the driving force behind lifting the ban, despite some trying to steer him off the issue, and that one of Carter's

primary directives to Levine when he assumed his role this year was to lift the ban.

“I think you all recognize and you should recognize that you have one person to thank above all else for this change of policy, who is the person who announced the policy when the change was made,” Levine told the crowd.

“I think that he said about as well as it could be said the reasons for the policy. It’s a matter of fairness to those who are serving today, and it’s a matter of being true to our principles. And it’s a matter of what’s best for our military to be open to all to serve so that we can have those who are best qualified in the position to serve.”

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