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SECRETARY OF THE ARMY SAYS MILITARY READY TO LIFT GAY BAN
Former Republican Lawmaker Sets Tone for Other Services

SANTA BARBARA, CA, October 26, 2009 - The Secretary of the Army, John McHugh, indicated this weekend that the Army is prepared to lift the ban on openly gay service if the Commander-in-Chief and the Congress decide to end the “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy, a prospect that has gathered steam in recent weeks. McHugh, formerly a Republican congressman from the conservative 23rd district of New York, is the highest official inside the Pentagon to express such support. He told the [Army Times](#) on Sunday that there was no reason to fear that major difficulties would result from lifting the ban, and that he would help implement the policy change when the time comes. “The Army has a big history of taking on similar issues,” he said, with “predictions of doom and gloom that did not play out.” He also suggested that repeal may come in phases, with early action involving, for example, allowing open gays to serve in some occupations and not others.

“What we’re seeing is a tipping point in the opinions of both military and civilian leaders on this issue,” said Dr. Nathaniel Frank, senior research fellow at the Palm Center. “The Army is the largest of the services and the most heavily involved in our wars abroad, and for Secretary McHugh to state clearly that it can handle repeal sends a strong signal to the other service secretaries that they can do the same.”

Dr. Aaron Belkin, director of the Palm Center, said Secretary McHugh’s comments were enormously significant. But he pointed out that there is no research to support the idea of letting gay soldiers serve in some units but not others. “The rationale for the ban applies equally across all job categories,” he said. “So if it’s okay to be an openly gay Arabic interpreter, it’s also okay to be openly gay in the infantry or on a submarine. Since conduct rules apply across the board, there’s just no basis for applying different standards to different specialties.”

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The Palm Center is a think tank at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Since 1998, the Center has been a leader in commissioning and disseminating research in the areas of gender, sexuality, and the military. For more information visit www.palmcenter.ucsb.edu.