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DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL: IS THE GAY BAN BASED ON PREJUDICE OR MILITARY NECESSITY?

The Commonwealth Club of California and The Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military

Conference on Saturday, December 9 includes leading military experts on both sides of the issue and officials from foreign countries that allow gay and lesbian soldiers to serve.

28 November 2000 - SAN FRANCISCO: The Commonwealth Club of California and the Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military (CSSMM) will present a conference December 9 on gays and lesbians in the military entitled Don't Ask, Don't Tell: Is the Gay Ban Based on Prejudice or Military Necessity? (The Commonwealth Club, 595 Market Street, 2nd floor, San Francisco, California). Specifically, the conference will focus on the relationship between the American gay ban and the experiences of foreign militaries in which gays and lesbians serve openly. The conference will consist of four debates and a public town hall meeting. The conference will be taped for possible re-broadcast to 225 National Public Radio stations throughout the U.S. as part of the Commonwealth Club's weekly radio series.

The conference will feature leading academic, policy, and military experts in the field including Honorable Lawrence J. Korb of the Council on Foreign Relations, Michelle Benecke of Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, and Professor Charles Moskos of Northwestern University. While speakers will report the findings of the latest research on gays in the military, their presentations will not assume any background expertise on the gay ban.

In addition to addressing the American gay ban, the conference will feature an international dimension. Twenty-three nations currently allow gay and lesbian soldiers to serve openly and a new, classified report by the British Ministry of Defense has concluded that London's January, 2000 decision to lift its gay ban has not harmed military performance. The British study will be addressed on a panel that will include Rob Nunn, an openly gay officer on a British submarine. The panel will also include military



representatives from Israel, Australia and New Zealand who will discuss the effects of lifting the gay ban in their countries.

"This conference will include advocates and critics of the current U.S. military policy known as 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell.'" says the Center's Director Aaron Belkin. Although the deliberations will include scholars on all sides of the issue, nine conservative experts from the Family Research Council, American Enterprise Institute, Center for Military Readiness and elsewhere declined invitations to participate. The conference is supported by the Commonwealth Club of California, the R. Gwin Follis Foundation, the Palm Foundation, the Institute on Global Cooperation and Conflict, the University of California Office of the President, and private donors.

The Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military (CSSMM) is an official research unit of the University of California whose mission is to promote the study of sexual minorities in the armed forces. Its board includes Honorable Lawrence J. Korb of the Council on Foreign Relations, Honorable Coit Blacker of Stanford University and Professor Janet Halley of Harvard Law School. The Commonwealth Club of California is the nation's oldest and largest public affairs forum, with more than 16,000 members including some of the San Francisco Bay Area's most influential and distinguished citizens. Since its founding in 1903, it has hosted prominent men and women from every field of human endeavor, from Clarence Darrow to the Dalai Lama and Audrey Hepburn to Desmond Tutu.

Aaron Belkin is Director of the CSSMM and Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He is author of "Gays and Lesbians in the Military", in the Companion to American Military History, Oxford University Press, and he has organized conferences in the United States, Canada, and Europe.

Don't Ask, Don't Tell: Is the gay ban based on prejudice or military necessity?
List of Speakers and Participants:

Aaron Belkin
Department of Political Science, University of California, Santa Barbara

Michelle Benecke
Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, Washington



Honorable Coit Blacker
Institute of International Studies, Stanford University

Professor Christopher Dandeker
Department of War Studies, Kings College London

Professor Michael C. Desch
Patterson School of Diplomacy, University of Kentucky

Gloria Duffy
Commonwealth Club of California

Lynn Eden
Center for International Security and Cooperation, Stanford University

Paul Gade
Army Research Institute

Bronwen Grey
Australian Defence Force

Professor Timothy J. Haggerty
Department of History, Middle Tennessee State University

Professor Melissa Sheridan Embser-Herbert
Department of Sociology, Hamline University

Steve Johnston
Royal British Army (Ret.)

Honorable Lawrence J. Korb
Council on Foreign Relations, New York

Avner Even-Zohar
Israel Defense Forces (Ret.)



Professor Rob MacCoun
Graduate School of Public Policy, University of California, Berkeley

Honorable Steve May
Arizona House of Representatives

Professor Diane H. Mazur
College of the Law, University of California, Hastings

Professor Laura Miller
Department of Sociology, University of California, Los Angeles

Professor Charles Moskos
Department of Sociology, Northwestern University

Deborah Mulliss
New Zealand Defence Force

Rob Nunn
Royal British Navy

C. Dixon Osburn
Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, Washington

Professor David Segal
Center for Research on Military Organization, University of Maryland

Professor Mady Segal
Department of Sociology, University of Maryland

Professor John Allen Williams
Political Science Department, Loyola University Chicago

List of countries that allow gays in the military

Australia



Austria
Bahamas
Belgium
Canada
Czech Republic
Denmark
Estonia
Finland
France
Germany
Ireland
Israel
Lithuania
Netherlands
New Zealand
Norway
Slovenia
South Africa
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
United Kingdom
Countries with explicit bans on gays in the military

Argentina
Belarus
Brazil
Croatia
Greece
Hungary
Luxembourg
Peru
Poland
Portugal
Turkey
Venezuela



The Commonwealth Club of California
Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military

Don't Ask, Don't Tell: Is the gay ban based on prejudice or military necessity?
Session Details

Session one: Does the gay ban preserve soldiers' privacy?

According to some supporters of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, the gay ban preserves soldiers' privacy because there are no open homosexuals in the U.S. armed forces at the current time. Critics argue, however, that there are large numbers of open gays and lesbians currently serving in the military and that lifting the ban will have no implication for soldiers' privacy. This session will be devoted to a consideration of the latest scholarly evidence on whether lifting the ban will have implications for soldiers' privacy.

Session two: Does the gay ban preserve unit cohesion?

Supporters of Don't Ask, Don't Tell have argued that surveys showing that heterosexual soldiers do not like gays and lesbians indicate that the presence of open homosexuals in the armed forces would undermine unit performance and cohesion. Some opponents have responded that these surveys do not show that gays undermine unit cohesion because whether or not group members like each other has no impact on organizational performance. This session will be devoted to a discussion of the scholarly evidence on the relationship between dislike, cohesion, and performance.

Session three: Are the experiences of foreign militaries relevant to the American case?

Opponents of Don't Ask, Don't Tell claim that when foreign militaries lift their gay bans, unit cohesion and performance do not suffer. Some advocates of Don't Ask, Don't Tell have responded that the experiences of foreign militaries are not relevant to the American case because of cultural differences, because few if any foreign militaries extend full rights to homosexuals in practice, and because few gays and lesbians come out of the closet even after foreign militaries lift their bans. This session will be devoted to a consideration of the scholarly data on the relevance of foreign military experiences to the American case.

Session four: What does the gay ban cost?



According to some gay and lesbian advocates, Don't Ask, Don't Tell is a financially expensive policy that leads to loss of talent and violence against women. Others respond that the gay ban does not lead to violence and that if the ban were lifted, gay-bashing would increase. This session will be devoted to the academic evidence on the costs of Don't Ask, Don't Tell.

Conference Time line, panels and panelists

8:15am - 9am: Breakfast and opening remarks

9am - 10:30am: "Does the gay ban preserve soldiers' privacy?"

Charles Moskos, Northwestern University
Melissa Sheridan Embser-Herbert, Hamline University
Timothy J. Haggerty, Middle Tennessee State University

10:45am - 12:30pm: "Does the gay ban preserve unit cohesion?"

Laura Miller, University of California, Los Angeles
John Allen Williams, Loyola University Chicago
Elizabeth Kier, University of Washington
Rob MacCoun, University of California, Berkeley
Mady Segal, University of Maryland
Michael C. Desch, University of Kentucky

12:30pm - 1:30pm: Lunch

1:30pm - 3:15pm: "Are foreign military experiences relevant to the U.S.?"

Christopher Dandeker, Kings College London
Lawrence J. Korb, Council on Foreign Relations
Paul Gade, Army Research Institute
David Segal, University of Maryland

3:30pm - 4:45pm: "What does the gay ban cost?"

Michelle Benecke, Servicemembers Legal Defense Network



C. Dixon Osburn, Servicemembers Legal Defense Network
Diane H. Mazur, University of California, Hastings

5:00pm - 6:30pm: Reception

6:30pm - 8:00pm: Town Meeting with Foreign Military Experts
Keynote Address by Steve May

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