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FORMER JOINT CHIEFS CHAIRMAN TELLS MILITARY LEADERSHIP "IT IS TIME" TO LIFT GAY BAN

Strongest Signal Yet to Current Pentagon Leadership

SANTA BARBARA, CA, January 27, 2010 - In a [statement](#) released today through Senator Kirsten Gillibrand's office (D-NY), former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General John Shalikashvili gave the strongest signal to date that now is the time for military leadership to move forward on repeal of the "don't ask, don't tell" policy and law. He stated, "As a nation built on the principle of equality, we should recognize and welcome change that will build a stronger, more cohesive military. It is time to repeal 'don't ask, don't tell' and allow our military leaders to create policy that holds our service members to a single standard of conduct and discipline."

Aaron Belkin, Director of the Palm Center, said General Shalikashvili's remarks were highly significant because he has now addressed the question not just of whether, but when, to repeal "don't ask, don't tell." "When the Chairman previously spoke about this issue, he cautioned patience," said Belkin. "Today, as one of only 17 people to hold the position of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, he is saying the time is now, and that taking this step will make our military stronger. This is an endorsement of the President's goals and a signal to the Pentagon that it's time for repeal." General Colin Powell, Shalikashvili's predecessor as Chairman, has also said the policy should be thoroughly reviewed.

Senator Kirsten Gillibrand's office released the Chairman's statement today, a signal of the Senator's continued efforts to reach out to military leaders toward ending "don't ask, don't tell." The Senator said, "The military's 'don't ask, don't tell' policy is an unjust, outdated and harmful rule that violates the civil rights of some of our bravest, most heroic men and women. I've been working with my colleagues in Congress and other leaders to overturn this wasteful and destructive policy. I am hopeful that President Obama will make this a top priority."

Senator Gillibrand has worked with Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Carl Levin (D-MI) to hold the first Senate hearings on gays in the military since 1993. The first hearing is expected in February. "Senator Gillibrand is clearly leading initiatives in the Senate on repeal," said Christopher Neff, Deputy Executive Director at the Palm Center. He added, "Both Senator Gillibrand and Chairman Levin are providing a foundation for the deliberations and actions of the White House, military community and members of the gay community."

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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.