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**OBAMA POSITIONED FOR SUCCESS WHERE CLINTON FAILED**

Health Care and “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” Battles Mirror Agenda That Weakened Clinton Presidency

SANTA BARBARA, CA, March 24, 2010—In pushing through health care reforms and changes in how the military’s ban on openly gay service is applied, President Obama may be positioning himself to succeed on the two main domestic issues that hobbled the first years of the Clinton administration. While a legislative battle over the repeal of “don’t ask, don’t tell” still lies ahead, on Friday the Pentagon’s office of the General Counsel gave Defense Secretary Robert Gates its recommendation for how to apply “don’t ask, don’t tell” in a way that is “more appropriate and fair.” The Pentagon has said it will make those intensions public this week.

According to researchers at the Palm Center, the changes could be the first significant alterations to how the ban on openly gay service is implemented since the current policy took effect in 1994. “If the ban is relaxed,” said Aaron Belkin, Director of the Palm Center, “President Obama would be moving toward an important goal, one that President Clinton hoped to achieve early in his presidency.” Belkin said the changes, which could include disallowing third-party allegations as admissible evidence for gay discharges, could represent “the first cracks in Humpty Dumpty in seventeen years, and a major step toward the inevitable repeal of the law.”

Nathaniel Frank, Senior Research Fellow and author of *Unfriendly Fire: How the Gay Ban Undermines the Military and Weakens America*, added that both Obama and Clinton faced heated opposition to their agendas. Yet, he said, “despite enormous resistance to reform in both the health care and gay troops debates, this President has held together a coalition that pushed changes through in health care and ‘don’t ask, don’t tell.’ If he builds on this progress by fighting successfully for legislative repeal of the gay ban, he will ensure his place in civil rights history not only for his own story, but as a fierce advocate of equal treatment for all.”

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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](http://www.palmcenter.ucsb.edu).