



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Indra Lusero, Assistant Director, 303-902-9402, [indralusero@palmcenter.ucsb.edu](mailto:indralusero@palmcenter.ucsb.edu)

### **SENATOR HARRY REID SAYS OBAMA SHOULD SIGN ORDER ON GAY TROOPS SLDN Also Joins Call for Executive Option**

Date: June 16, 2009

SANTA BARBARA, CA, June 16, 2009 – Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid has called on President Obama to sign an executive order suspending the “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy, according to the Advocate magazine.

June 18, 2009 Update: Senator Reid has retracted his call for an executive order suspending the ban. We will provide more details as to the reason for his change of mind when they become available.

Referring to the repeal of the ban, Reid told Advocate reporter Kerry Eleveld that, "My hope is that it can be done administratively." Eleveld added that "A Democratic aide later clarified that Reid was speaking about the possibility of using an executive order to suspend discharges or perhaps halting enforcement of the policy by changing departmental regulations within the Department of Defense."

As well, the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (SLDN) has called on President Obama to sign an executive order. In a letter to the New York Times yesterday, SLDN Executive Director Aubrey Sarvis wrote that, "President Obama should consider all viable options he can take on his own to get rid of this discriminatory law, including issuing a ‘stop-loss’ order." For more than a decade, SLDN has been the largest and most influential group in the country working on the “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy

The idea of ending the ban by executive order gained momentum after the release last month of a Palm Center study showing that the president has the authority to suspend “don’t ask, don’t tell” via a stroke of the pen. Before that time, many argued that only Congress or the courts could lift the ban on service by openly gay troops.

Others calling for the President to sign an executive order include the New York Times editorial page, the Human Rights Campaign, Knights Out, an organization of gay and lesbian alumni of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center CEO Lorri Jean, and former Clinton White House official Richard Socarides.



Palm Center Director Aaron Belkin said that awareness of the executive option has changed the conversation about “don’t ask, don’t tell” substantially. “Obama used to duck the issue by blaming Congress for the inertia. Now it’s clear that he has unilateral authority to fulfill his campaign promise.”

###

The Palm Center is a research institute at the University of California, Santa Barbara. The Center uses rigorous social science to inform public discussions of controversial social issues, enabling policy outcomes to be informed more by evidence than by emotion. Its data-driven approach is premised on the notion that the public makes wise choices on social issues when high-quality information is available. For more information, visit [www.palmcenter.ucsb.edu](http://www.palmcenter.ucsb.edu).