



THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

APR 30 2010


The Honorable Ike Skelton
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

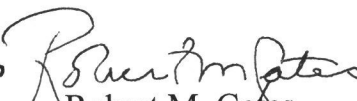
Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am writing in response to your letter of April 28 requesting my views on the advisability of legislative action to repeal the so-called "Don't Ask Don't Tell" statute prior to the completion of the Department of Defense review of this matter.

I believe in the strongest possible terms that the Department must, prior to any legislative action, be allowed the opportunity to conduct a thorough, objective, and systematic assessment of the impact of such a policy change; develop an attentive comprehensive implementation plan, and provide the President and the Congress with the results of this effort in order to ensure that this step is taken in the most informed and effective manner. A critical element of this effort is the need to systematically engage our forces, their families, and the broader military community throughout this process. Our military must be afforded the opportunity to inform us of their concerns, insights, and suggestions if we are to carry out this change successfully.

Therefore, I strongly oppose any legislation that seeks to change this policy prior to the completion of this vital assessment process. Further, I hope Congress will not do so, as it would send a very damaging message to our men and women in uniform that in essence their views, concerns, and perspectives do not matter on an issue with such a direct impact and consequence for them and their families.


Admiral Michael G. Mullen
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff


Robert M. Gates
Secretary of Defense

cc:
The Honorable Howard P. "Buck" McKeon
Ranking Member

