

# The New York Times

## Opinion: A Military Success Story

Opinion by Editorial Board  
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As the country approaches the first anniversary of the repeal of “don’t ask, don’t tell” on Sept. 20, politicians and others who warned of disastrous consequences if gay people were allowed to serve openly in the military are looking pretty foolish.

The inaccuracy of their gloomy predictions was underscored last Monday with the publication of a detailed study of the repeal’s impact by the Palm Center, a branch of the Williams Institute at the U.C.L.A. School of Law. The center’s research team, which included professors at West Point, the Naval Academy, the Air Force Academy and the Marine Corps War College, concluded that ending don’t ask, don’t tell — and its policy of dishonesty and concealment — has had “no overall negative impact on military readiness or its component dimensions, including cohesion, recruitment, retention, assaults, harassment or morale.”

This finding is consistent with the forecast contained in the Defense Department’s comprehensive assessment of the policy before its repeal, and with subsequent public statements by various military leaders, including the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Martin Dempsey, and the defense secretary, Leon Panetta.

Harassment of gays in the military and discrimination against them have not disappeared, but the study’s authors found no evidence of any pattern of hostility as a consequence of repeal. A small minority of service members are unhappy with the new policy of openness, but the morale of some gay and straight service members appears to have improved significantly. The study largely and correctly credits the smooth transition to the Pentagon’s “carefully designed implementation and training process.”

The report’s authors did not seek to address the burdens imposed on married gay service members and their families by the Defense of Marriage Act, the cruel and unconstitutional 1996 law that denies same-sex couples who are legally married under state law the same federal benefits that are afforded to heterosexual couples.

But those burdens are undeniably real: same-sex spouses are denied important military benefits, like discounted housing, surviving spouse benefits, treatment in military medical facilities, and medical and dental insurance. All of this disrespects the service and the sacrifice of gay and lesbian troops, as well as the core military values of equality.

Beyond its obvious unfairness, the act’s affront to equal protection harms national security interests. When the Supreme Court returns from its summer recess, it will decide whether to add to its docket cases questioning the constitutionality of the law. The justices should hear those cases, and then issue an authoritative ruling striking it down.