

PALM CENTER

BLUEPRINTS FOR SOUND PUBLIC POLICY

Two Decades of Indispensable Palm Center Achievements

For 24 years, the Palm Center has consistently set the narrative on LGBT military service by providing scientific and medical facts, establishing the support of military leaders and medical experts, and sharing the history of successful inclusive policies in key allied militaries. At every step of the way, our partners in advocacy and politics have recognized our essential role in helping make crucial progress in advancing LGBT equality, culminating in the repeal of DADT a decade ago and the reversal of the transgender service ban this year. Below are highlights of our indispensable achievements.

Researched Gay and Lesbian Troops in Foreign Militaries

From our very first event in January 2000, an international conference on DADT and military personnel policies, Palm has worked to shift the public conversation in ways that would move decision-makers. On this topic, we generated dozens of media headlines, including front page articles in the *New York Times*, about gays and lesbians serving successfully in the British, Canadian, Israeli and other foreign forces. We know this theme helped influence judges, journalists, politicians, and military leaders. Senator Susan Collins explained her vote to repeal DADT, in part, in terms of the lessons of foreign militaries.

Broke the Story of Fired Arabic Linguists

In 2002, Palm broke the story of Alastair Gamble, an Army Arabic linguist fired for being gay. Palm then built a media campaign around this and additional cases. Using FOIA requests to obtain data, Palm pushed out a steady stream of embarrassing stories about the firing of gays and lesbians in mission-critical job categories, putting human faces on the issue and creating a new category of media coverage that endured until repeal.

Obtained Support of Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff

Palm arranged the publication of a 2007 *New York Times* op-ed by General John Shalikashvili, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, calling for repeal of DADT. Our work with the retired general prompted him to become the first such senior official to so publicly support repeal, generated a tidal wave of press, opened space for other senior officers to follow suit, and was cited extensively by advocates and allies in Congress and the Pentagon.

Created Flag and General Officers Report

Palm released its *Flag and General Officers Report* evaluating the effectiveness of DADT in 2008. The report was based on a year of research including hearings in Washington, and was signed by four retired Generals and Admirals from the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines. The report made a huge splash in the media and during hearings in Congress, and represents the first time a Marine Corps General publicly called for the repeal of the ban.

Rallied 104 Retired Generals and Admirals

Palm created a major national media story in 2008, and gave a fundamental body blow to the narrative of military support for the ban, by gathering 104 retired Generals and Admirals to support repeal of DADT. Palm spent two years reaching out to 4,000 officers to create the list, and the story was picked up widely in the media and used repeatedly to undermine assertions that the ban had universal military support. Former SLDN Executive Director Dixon Osburn called this the single most important project in the entire repeal movement.

Used Executive Order as Leverage for DADT Repeal

Palm reframed the entire national conversation about DADT by releasing a 2009 study that exposed the fact that the President could end the ban with an executive order. Pressure on the White House to sign an executive order then came from 77 members of Congress, the Human Rights Campaign, the Center for American Progress, and the editorial page of the *New York Times* – resulting in pressure to accelerate the legislative move to repeal it.

Credited for DADT Repeal

When Congress finally voted to repeal DADT in 2010, the president of the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund observed that, “this day never would have arrived (or it would have been a much longer wait) without the persistent, grinding work of the Palm Center.”

Dismantled Rationale for Transgender Ban

Between 2014 and 2016, Palm produced a critical mass of research reports, including three studies published in a peer-reviewed journal, establishing that there is no valid reason for the Pentagon’s transgender ban; that implementing inclusive policy would not harm readiness; and that transgender personnel should be treated according the same standard as everyone else. They were signed or validated by retired General and Flag Officers and U.S. and military Surgeons General.

Deployed Lessons of Transgender Service in Allied Militaries

Palm organized and funded a 2014 conference on foreign militaries co-sponsored with ACLU that featured currently-serving transgender personnel from five nations’ militaries, along with Ministry representatives. Participants explained that inclusive policy has not harmed their forces. The conference attracted media coverage on five continents, and prompted a statement of support by then-Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi.

Credited for 2016 Transgender Ban Repeal

When the Obama Pentagon created a working group to study repeal of the transgender ban, Palm provided group members and political allies with 21 policy memos covering administrative and medical aspects of repeal designed to persuade officials to support repeal and adopt best practices. Our prior reports also clearly played a crucial role in repeal. During a 2016 White House ceremony celebrating the historic lifting of the transgender ban, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Anthony Kurta credited the Palm Center as one of the two organizations most responsible for ending it.

Organized 56 retired Generals and Admirals

Immediately after President Trump tweeted that he would reinstate the transgender ban in 2017, the Palm Center released a statement by 56 retired Generals and Admirals who said that banning transgender troops would compromise military readiness and, like the failed DADT policy, force troops to lie in order to serve. The senior signatory of the statement was a retired four-star Marine General, and the statement attracted considerable media coverage.

Supported and Advanced Litigation

Four separate lawsuits were filed against the Trump ban immediately after it was announced. Palm worked closely with the litigators on strategy, policy interpretation, argument and messaging, providing and explaining material in memos, reports and correspondence that highlighted the weakest aspects of the policy. These efforts were instrumental in supporting the litigation that kept transgender-inclusive service alive for three years, making it harder to argue that open service harms readiness. A top litigator said “we would not be winning in court if it weren’t for Palm.”

Led Expert Response Demonstrating Dishonesty of Trump Ban

When Defense Secretary James Mattis released the details of the Trump ban in 2018, the Palm Center quickly deployed a barrage of reports and validations repudiating the false assertions propping up discrimination. This content was featured extensively in media coverage and court filings on the ban. Palm had worked with the American Medical Association to pass a resolution based on Palm research stating there is no medically valid reason for the ban. Days after Mattis announced his plan, Palm helped issue forceful public statements from the American Medical Association, American Psychological Association, American Psychiatric Association, and six former U.S. Surgeons General repudiating the ban. Within weeks, Palm released a 55-page report dismantling every aspect of the ban, signed by three former military Surgeons General.

Cited by House Speaker in Historic Congressional Vote

The day the House passed an historic, bipartisan resolution opposing the transgender ban in 2019, Speaker Nancy Pelosi spoke during debate on the Congressional floor and cited the 56 retired Generals and Admirals gathered by Palm. The Speaker quoted the officers' assertion that the ban "would cause significant disruptions, deprive the military of mission-critical talent, and compromise the integrity of transgender troops who would be forced to live a lie."

Released Major Study Showing Transgender Ban Harmed Readiness

In 2020, the Palm Center published a rigorous study, reflecting a year of research and signed by three former military Surgeons General, showing that the transgender ban harms readiness. We successfully pitched the study to the *Washington Post* and then we provided the study and *Post* story to congressional allies and the Biden transition team.

Wrote Memo Showing Pentagon Can Lift Ban in Thirty Days

Concerned that, if the new administration failed to lift the ban immediately, opponents could leverage the delay to derail the effort, we noted that a parallel track of inclusive policy regulations had stayed on the books even under the Trump ban (in order to manage those troops who were "grandfathered" in under the Obama policy); so we published a policy memo in 2020 explaining how quickly inclusive policy could be restored since there was no need to develop new regulations or engage in more study. The *New York Times* covered our memo, which we provided along with the *Times* story to congressional allies and the Biden transition team.

Gave Political Leaders Ammunition and Pressure

In early 2020, we reached out to every Republican, Independent, and Democratic presidential campaign to ensure they were armed with the latest data about the harms of the transgender ban and the success of inclusive policy. We pressed all campaigns to make a "day one" pledge to restore inclusive policy, which Joe Biden did in writing. After the election, we assembled a coalition of 14 LGBTQ groups to request a meeting with the Biden transition team, in which we conveyed our expectation that Biden would honor his day-one pledge, sending a powerful signal that if the administration failed to act quickly, it would encounter blowback.

Fruits of Our Efforts Appear in Executive Order Lifting Transgender Ban

On his sixth day in office in 2021, President Biden issued a robust executive order lifting the ban, calling for a progress report in just sixty days, and quoting Palm Center language verbatim, saying that "transgender troops are as medically fit as their non-transgender peers and that there is no medically valid reason" for the ban.