

Time to End \"Don't Ask, Don't Tell\"

Michael Sean Winters | Feb. 2, 2010 NCR Today

Ever since President Barack Obama pledged to overturn the \"Don't Ask, Don't Tell\" policy in his State of the Union address, conservatives have been hiding behind the claim that politics should not dictate to the military, that military culture is unlike civilian culture, and that the military should not be an avenue for social policy.

Of course, if these objections sound familiar to any student of history, all of them were raised when Harry S. Truman desegregated the military by executive order. In 1948. An election year. You will also recall that this decision did not cost Mr. Truman the election.

What the conservative zealots and anti-gay bigots misunderstand is the basic sense of fairness that is an integral part of American culture and the American psyche.

Now, of course, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Admiral Mullen, has said that ending \"Don't Ask, Don't Tell\" is \"the right thing to do.\" He pointed out that the issue was one of integrity, both the individual's and the institution's. So, there is no more hiding behind the military, and conservatives need to rethink that talking point about not interjecting politics into military considerations.

\"Don't Ask, Don't Tell\" never made sense militarily, of course. A person who is open about their sexuality, and faces no punishment therefrom, is not a target for blackmailing, but someone who must hide something is. I wonder how many foreign espionage bureaus considered the feasibility of recruiting gay members of the military as spies. The policy was adopted not for military or security reasons but because it was the only thing that could be achieved politically in the 90s. Every civilized nation has ended their bans on gays in the military. It is time for America to do the same. The sexual preference of members of our Armed Services should be private. You can ask if you want, and they can tell if they want, but it would be best if everyone just got about their own business.

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