

Senate Passes “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” Repeal, the Policy Banning Gays from Openly Serving in the Military

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Moments ago, by a 65-31 vote, the Senate acted to repeal Don’t Ask Don’t Tell, the policy banning gays from openly serving in the military. The same six GOP senators who broke with their party during the [cloture vote earlier today](#) also voted for repeal: Sens. Susan Collins, Olympia Snowe, Scott Brown, Lisa Murkowski, George Voinovich, and Mark Kirk. Two more Republicans — John Ensign and Richard Burr — joined with Democrats in final passage.

Earlier this week, the House had passed the same legislation by 250-175 vote. More than [14,000 servicemembers](#) have been dismissed because of the DADT policy.

For many Democrats, including [President Obama](#), today’s final passage (and the signing of the bill, which will occur in the near future) marks the fulfillment of a promise that they made repeatedly. In a speech to the Human Rights Campaign in October, Obama said, “I will end Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell. That’s [my commitment to you.](#)”

And in perhaps the most memorable moment of the Netroots Nation liberal bloggers conference this past July, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) was presented with Lt. Dan Choi’s graduation ring from West Point. Choi, a prominent DADT repeal advocate and Arabic-speaking linguist, was [discharged from the military](#) after he came out as gay on The Rachel Maddow Show. At the time, Reid said he would return Choi’s ring when DADT repeal is signed. “When we get it passed, you’ll take it back, right?” Reid said to Choi. “I sure will, but I’m going to hold you accountable,” Choi responded. Watch it:

Update: In [a statement](#) released this evening, Defense Secretary Robert Gates said, “Once this legislation is signed into law by the President, the Department of Defense will immediately proceed with the planning necessary to carry out this change carefully and methodically, but purposefully. ... It is therefore important that our men and women in uniform understand that while today’s historic vote means that this policy will change, the implementation and certification process will take an additional period of time. In the meantime, the current law and policy will remain in effect.”

Update: Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin (V), who has been evasive on Don’t Ask Don’t Tell, was not in the chamber today for any of the votes. ABC News reports that he was instead attending a holiday party.

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