

# Troops oppose repeal of 'don't ask'

## But most troops would stay in if ban ends

Most active-duty service members continue to oppose President-elect Barack Obama's campaign pledge to end the "don't ask, don't tell" policy to allow gays to serve openly in the military, a Military Times survey shows.

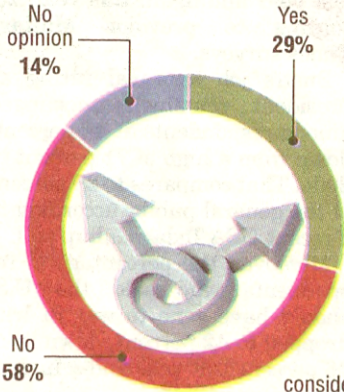
Moreover, if the policy was repealed, nearly 10 percent of respondents said they would not re-enlist or extend their service, and 14 percent said they would consider terminating their careers after serving their obligated tours.

Army Capt. Steven J. Lacy, a logistician assigned to the 71st Transportation Battalion at Fort Eustis, Va., said he is very concerned about the policy being repealed.

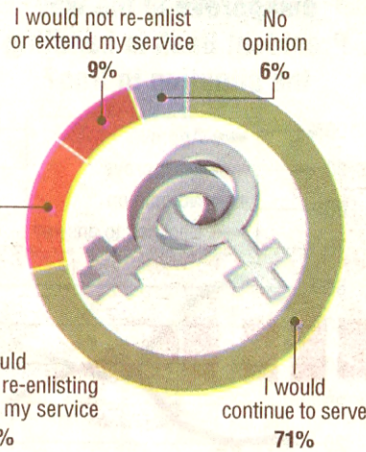
"I think a lot of people are," Lacy said. "In the field environment, you're in very close proximity to one another. The fact that someone could be openly gay could exacerbate stress on teams and small units when you're already at a high stress level."

However, 71 percent of respondents said they would continue to

**Do you support President-elect Barack Obama's calls to repeal the "don't ask, don't tell" policy?**



**If the "don't ask, don't tell" policy is overturned and gays are allowed to serve openly, how would you respond?**



serve if the policy was overturned.

Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Pfau, of the 284th Engineer Company in Seagoville, Texas, said he isn't concerned about the issue.

"That policy does not bother me whatsoever," Pfau said. "I don't judge people by their sexual orientation. I judge them by the kind of person they are. As long as they do their job, it does not bother me."

Obama pledged during his campaign to overturn "don't ask, don't tell," though he reportedly will not push to repeal the ban early in his presidency, perhaps not until 2010.

The Pentagon has discharged nearly 12,500 service members since the law was implemented in 1994, including 800 "mission critical" troops such as Arabic linguists, medics, pilots and intelligence analysts, according to the

Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, a nonprofit group dedicated to lifting the ban.

Elaine Donnelly, the founder and president of the Center for Military Readiness, which supports the ban, said the number of discharges under "don't ask, don't tell" could be reduced to near zero if induction forms contained a question about sexual preference.

"Bill Clinton was allowed to take that question off those forms," Donnelly said. "That was the only compromise of 1993."

Donnelly said Clinton's effort to lift the ban was one of the most contentious efforts of his administration, severely strained his relationship with the military and played a large role in the Democrats losing control of Congress in 1994.

"The drive to repeal the law this time is coming from Congress," she said. "Anybody who thinks that [Obama's] administration won't push for it is mistaken."

Donnelly warned of the consequences in repealing the ban, which she said could include forced cohabitation of heterosexuals and homosexuals in all branches of the military and disci-

plinary action against those who oppose or protest the integration.

David Segal, a military sociologist at the University at Maryland, drew a parallel between the current debate and earlier discussions about changing the composition of the force, from racial integration in the 1940s and 1950s to gender integration in the 1970s.

Segal described the nearly 10 percent of active-duty respondents who said they would leave the military if the policy was overturned as "a relatively small number."



Lacy

"That's a smaller number of career officers than who in the 1970s said they would leave the service if women were admitted to West Point," Segal said. "They were expressing a strongly held attitude. But when women were admitted to West Point, there was not anything near that kind of exodus from the service."

Similar debates have surfaced in other countries that recently lifted in the ban, including Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia and Israel, Segal said.

"None of the dire consequences that were expected occurred," Segal said. "My sense is, and this is just impressionistic, it was more peaceful than the gender integration of the military." □

— Brendan McGarry



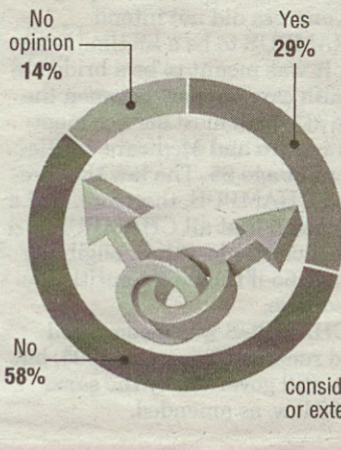
# inion

OPINION VIEWS

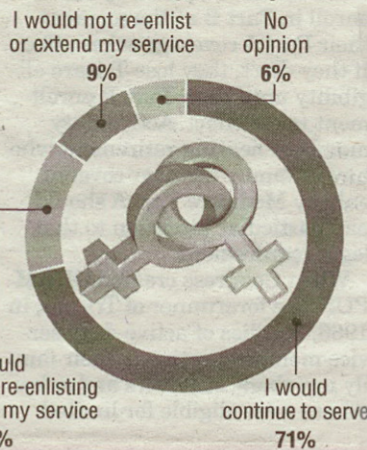
Letter published in Navy, Army, Air Force and Marine Corps Times 1-19-09

## LETTERS

**Do you support President-elect Barack Obama's calls to repeal the "don't ask, don't tell" policy?**



**If the "don't ask, don't tell" policy is overturned and gays are allowed to serve openly, how would you respond?**



Source: Military Times poll

JOHN HARMAN/STAFF

**Readers react to the portion of the Military Times poll that asked respondents' thoughts on gay people serving in the military.**

Casual readers of your Jan. 5 edition might have missed the real story. As in previous years, the poll revealed that approximately 58 percent of respondents are opposed to efforts to repeal the "don't ask, don't tell" policy. The catchphrase incorrectly labels the 1993 law, Section 654, Title 10, which clearly states that homosexuals are not eligible to serve in the military.

More importantly, the Military Times poll asked a new question that produced jaw-dropping results: "If the 'don't ask, don't tell' policy is overturned and gays are allowed to serve openly, how would you respond?"

Your article emphasized that 71 percent of respondents said they would continue to serve. But almost 10 percent said "I would not re-enlist or extend my service," and 14 percent said, "I

See next page

From previous page

would consider not re-enlisting or extending my service." Only 6 percent expressed "No Opinion." Before voting to repeal the law, members of Congress ought to do the math.

If the opinions of reserve and National Guard troops are similar to those of active-duty personnel surveyed by Military Times, and if the poll's findings approximate the number of military people who would leave or consider leaving if the 1993 law is repealed, combined losses — including Guard and reserve forces — would be huge.

A rough estimate using Defense Department numbers for all service branches and components, totaling more than 2 million, indicates that a loss of one in 10 service members would cost the military approximately 228,600 people — more than are serving in the active-duty Marine Corps. If an additional 14 percent decided to leave, the voluntary exodus would translate into a loss of almost 527,000 — a figure approaching the size of today's active-duty Army.

The poll's findings are not an exact prediction, but they are significant and ought to be of concern to President-elect Barack Obama and members of Congress

who are considering a vote to repeal the 1993 law.

There is no "national security" argument for repealing a law designed to protect good order and discipline in military living conditions offering little or no privacy. Regardless of what it is called, congressional repeal of the 1993 law would destroy the volunteer force.

**Elaine Donnelly**  
president

Center for Military Readiness  
Livonia, Mich.