

*WASHINGTON, DC (December 15, 2010) -- Today, Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) issued the following statement in support of the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell.*

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today in strong support of H.R. 2965, the Don't Ask, Don't Tell Repeal Act of 2010. I would like to thank Congressman Murphy, Majority Leader Hoyer, and Congressman Frank for their tireless leadership on this issue.

Madam Speaker, I am a cosponsor of this legislation because American men and women should not have to choose between the opportunity to serve their country and being honest about their sexual orientation. Yet since 1993, over 13,000 men and women have been discharged from our military under Don't Ask, Don't Tell.

There are countless arguments in favor of ending this policy. Polls have demonstrated that an overwhelming majority of Americans, including those in the military, support ending Don't Ask, Don't Tell. Many of our closest military allies, including Israel, the United Kingdom, and Canada, have implemented policies of open service without negative consequences to unit cohesion or military performance. Particularly at a time when our armed forces are stretched thin, we cannot afford to turn away Americans who are willing and able to serve. The GAO reports that hundreds of men and women with unique abilities, including critical language skills, have been discharged under this policy.

However, the most compelling reason for ending Don't Ask, Don't Tell is that this policy is not only damaging, it is discriminatory. It is a policy that forces young men and women to lie about their identity in order to serve their country.

In February, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen, told the Senate, "No matter how I look at this issue, I cannot escape being troubled by the fact that we have in place a policy which forces young men and women to lie about who they are in order to defend their fellow citizens. For me personally, it comes down to integrity – theirs as individuals and ours as an institution."

Last week, Secretary Gates called for legislative action, stating "I would hope that the Congress would act to repeal 'don't ask, don't tell.'" Today, we will move one step closer to finally ending this damaging policy. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I yield back the balance of my time.