

Sexual Orientation and Military Service

Adopted by the APA Council of Representatives, July 2004

WHEREAS the American Psychological Association (APA) has long opposed discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation; and

WHEREAS the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell, Don’t Pursue” policy as mandated by Title 10 of the U.S. Code (Section 654) discriminates on the basis of sexual orientation, and has caused many qualified personnel to be involuntarily separated from military service solely because of their sexual orientation; and

WHEREAS in light of the enactment of 10 USC § 654 in 1994, APA’s 1991 resolution U.S Department of Defense Policy on Sexual Orientation and Advertising in APA Publications needs to be revised; and

WHEREAS there is a long history of collaboration between psychology and the military (Dunivin, 1994; Yerkes, 1921); and

WHEREAS the law creates ethical dilemmas for military psychologists and it is APA’s responsibility to address these concerns (American Psychological Association, 2002); and

WHEREAS empirical evidence fails to show that sexual orientation is germane to any aspect of military effectiveness including unit cohesion, morale, recruitment and retention (Belkin, 2003; Belkin & Bateman, 2003; Herek, Jobe, & Carney, 1996; MacCoun, 1996; National Defense Research Institute, 1993); and

WHEREAS comparative data from foreign militaries and domestic police and fire departments show that when lesbians, gay men and bisexuals are allowed to serve openly there is no evidence of disruption or loss of mission effectiveness (Belkin & McNichol, 2000-2001; Gade, Segal, & Johnson, 1996; Koegel, 1996); and

WHEREAS when openly gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals have been allowed to serve in the U.S. Armed Forces,¹ there has been no evidence of disruption or loss of mission effectiveness; and

WHEREAS the U.S. military is capable of integrating members of groups historically excluded from its ranks, as demonstrated by its success in reducing both racial and gender discrimination (Binkin & Bach, 1977; Binkin, Eitelberg, Schexnider, & Smith, 1982; Kauth & Landis, 1996; Landis, Hope, & Day, 1984; Thomas & Thomas, 1996);

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that APA reaffirms its opposition to discrimination based on sexual orientation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that APA reaffirms its support for our men and women in uniform and its dedication to promoting their health and well-being; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that APA recognizes and abhors the many detrimental effects that the law has had on individual service members, the military, and American society since its enactment in 1994; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that APA take a leadership role among national organizations in seeking to eliminate discrimination in and by the military based on sexual orientation through federal advocacy and all other appropriate means; and

¹ Cammermeyer v. Aspin, 850 F. Supp. 910. (W. D. Wash, 1994). Cammermeyer served in the National Guard for over three years prior to dismissal after stating that she was a lesbian. She was reinstated after a lawsuit. Watkins v. United States Army, 875 F.2d 699 (9th Cir. 1989), cert. denied, United States Army v. Watkins, 498 U.S. 957 (1990). Army was estopped from denying reenlistment to Watkins, an openly gay man, because it had repeatedly permitted him to reenlist with full knowledge of his homosexuality.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that APA act to ameliorate the negative effects of the current law through the training and education of psychologists; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that APA disseminate scientific knowledge and professional expertise relevant to implementing this resolution; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution replaces the 1991 resolution "U.S. Department of Defense Policy on Sexual Orientation and Advertising in APA Publications;" and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that APA reaffirms its strong commitment to removing the stigma of mental illness that has long been associated with homosexual and bisexual behavior and orientations; promoting the health and well-being of lesbian, gay, and bisexual adults and youth; eliminating violence against lesbian, gay, and bisexual service members; and working to ensure the equality of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people, both as individuals and members of committed same-sex relationships, in such areas as employment, housing, public accommodation, licensing, parenting, and access to legal benefits.

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