



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on May 13, 2011

Military Weighs Change in Home School Recruitment Policy

One of the nation's leading home school groups is urging the Department of Defense (DOD) to change its policy on how many home schooled recruits are allowed into the armed forces. Since 1998 the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) "has been working with Congress and the Department of Defense to extend 'Tier 1' status — the military's highest enlistment option — to home schoolers," reported CBN News.



Official DOD policy allows no more than 10 percent of recruits with a non-traditional high school education — including home schooled graduates — to join the military. But in early May the Pentagon agreed "to allow home schooled recruits through September 2012 as part of a trial period to see if a policy change is necessary," reported CBN.

The DOD implemented an initial five-year pilot program several years ago that allowed home schoolers to enlist as Tier 1 recruits. But according to HSLDA, the test did not generate the positive results home school leaders had hoped, "due to numerous inaccuracies." The home school group challenged the results of the study, prompting DOD to commission a new four-year study, beginning in June 2007. During this study, which was set to expire September 30, home school graduates have been able to enlist as Tier 1 recruits.

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But with the deadline looming and with no word back from DOD on the results of the study, HSLDA officials grew concerned that home schoolers might again be relegated to second-class status as military recruits.

In early April, the HSLDA team, headed by the group's president Mike Smith, met with DOD officials to discuss the issue and the future for home schooled recruits. "While the officials said that they did not know the results of the study, they made it clear that they did not want to harm patriotic home school graduates," noted an HSLDA press release. "They promised us that they would look into the possibility of extending the current policy until more information was known about the study."

Following the meeting the DOD announced that it would extend the current policy through September 2012, so that most home school graduates will be able to continue enlisting as Tier 1 recruits.

With the House Armed Services Committee currently reviewing the military's recruiting guidelines,



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many critics of the current policy noting that the dramatic increase of students being taught at home has made the DOD's policy that penalizes home schooled recruits completely obsolete.

As reported by [The New American](#), U.S. Census statistics show that there are now more than two million home schooled students in the U.S., up from an estimated 20,000 just 30 years ago. As for the quality of education home schooled students receive, a 2009 study by the [National Home Education Research Institute](#) (NHERI) found that "home schoolers score an average of 34 to 39 percentile points higher than the norm on standardized achievement tests," reported *The New American*, with the national average for home schooled students ranging "from the 84th percentile for language, math, and social studies to the 89th percentile for reading."

While many colleges and universities, as well as private businesses, have begun to discover that home schoolers are better prepared than the average traditionally educated student, HSLDA's Jeremiah Lorrig noted that many military recruiters are still unaware of the high quality of home schooled recruits, or even of the DOD policy. "Problems arise not because of discriminatory policies," Lorrig said of the obstacles home schoolers sometimes face when trying to enlist, "but because too many recruiters are still not familiar with the home school policy" being tested by the DOD.

Lorrig said that "the vast majority of home schoolers enlisting in any of the armed service branches do not encounter problems but complete the process as easily as any other enlistee." Nonetheless, he said that it is nonetheless best that home schooled students wishing to enlist be familiar with the requirements in order to alleviate potential problems. [Click here](#) for HSLDA's "Enlisting Help" article for home schooled students wishing to serve in the armed forces.



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