



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on June 28, 2013

Pentagon Prepares to Extend Benefits to Military Same-sex Couples

Hours after the [Supreme Court struck down](#) a provision in the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) banning homosexual partners from receiving the same federal benefits as traditional married couples, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel vowed to immediately put the wheels in motion to allow homosexuals serving in the armed forces to access federal benefits for their same-sex “spouses.”



“The Department of Defense welcomes the Supreme Court’s decision today on the Defense of Marriage Act,” a statement from Hagel’s office read. “The Department will immediately begin the process of implementing the Supreme Court’s decision in consultation with the Department of Justice and other executive branch agencies. The Department of Defense intends to make the same benefits available to all military spouses — regardless of sexual orientation — as soon as possible. That is now the law, and it is the right thing to do.”

Up until [Congress repealed](#) the official “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy in December 2010, openly homosexual individuals had always been banned from serving in the military. Since then it appears that top brass at the Pentagon have become enthusiastic champions of the burgeoning homosexual sub-culture in the armed forces, with the extension of federal benefits for “gay” soldiers and their partners certain to help cement the change. The Pentagon estimates that there are some 18,000 homosexual couples within the U.S. military.

“Every person who serves our nation in uniform stepped forward with courage and commitment,” declared the DoD in its statement following the Supreme Court decision. “All that matters is their patriotism, their willingness to serve their country and their qualifications to do so. Today’s ruling helps ensure that all men and women who serve this country can be treated fairly and equally, with the full dignity and respect they so richly deserve.”

In February, following former Defense Secretary Leon Panetta’s proclamation that “discrimination based on sexual orientation no longer has a place in the military,” the Pentagon began testing what it could get away with by issuing partners of homosexual personnel military ID cards, granting them access to base facilities, and handing out other benefits not directly prohibited by DOMA. But the High Court’s ruling on DOMA now “frees the Pentagon to follow through on what Panetta laid out shortly before he left office,” reported the military newspaper [Stars and Stripes](#). With federal law no longer a hindrance, Panetta projected “it will be the policy of the Department to construe the words ‘spouse’ and ‘marriage’ without regard to sexual orientation, and married couples, irrespective of their sexual orientation, and their dependents, will be given full military benefits.”

Now, reported [Stars and Stripes](#), the “Pentagon will have to decide whether only legal marriages qualify for benefits or whether those in domestic partnerships are eligible as well, Panetta said in his memo.”



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General Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, dutifully followed up Hagel's announcement by declaring in a statement that "the Joint Staffs have been very clear that we'll follow the law of the land. The law of the land has just changed, and we will now as quickly as possible assess what that means."

One group within the military, Christian chaplains, however, are understandably concerned with how the Department of Defense will interpret the "law," particularly with regard to the rights of chaplains to refuse to perform homosexual marriage ceremonies on the grounds that they violate biblical principles and moral law.

Ron Crews of the group [Chaplain Alliance for Religious Liberty](#) said in a statement that the Supreme Court decision highlights the need for chaplains to be guaranteed religious liberty protections in the pursuit of their official duties. "Most of the faith groups in our country firmly hold that marriage is the union of one man and one woman," said Crews, a retired chaplain with the U.S. Army Reserve. "They strongly believe that children deserve to know their mother and father. Chaplains from those faith groups will continue to minister with those convictions."

Crews noted that since its enactment in 1996, DOMA has provided legal protections to chaplains "as they minister to service members and their families in a manner consistent with those sincerely held beliefs. That freedom is now at significant risk."

Crews and the Chaplain Alliance for Religious Liberty submitted an amicus brief to the Supreme Court explaining how the repeal of DOMA could impact the religious liberty of service members and military chaplains. "This ruling makes absolutely clear that Congress must pass comprehensive religious liberty protections," the brief said of the High Court's decision. "Chaplains as well as all military personnel must be able to serve our nation without giving up their religious beliefs and convictions."

On May 15 the [Obama administration demonstrated the seriousness of the issue](#) facing chaplains when its Office of Management and Budget (OMB) released a statement saying that the president "strongly objects" to amendments in the 2013 National Defense Authorization Act designed to protect the religious liberties of chaplains. The amendments, crafted in part by U.S Representative Todd Akin (R-Mo.), stipulate that no member of the armed forces may "direct, order, or require a chaplain to perform any duty, rite, ritual, ceremony, service, or function that is contrary to the conscience, moral principles, or religious beliefs of the chaplain, or contrary to the moral principles and religious beliefs of the endorsing faith group of the chaplain" (Section 536), and that "military installation or other property owned or rented by, or otherwise under the jurisdiction or control of, the Department of Defense may not be used to officiate, solemnize, or perform a marriage or marriage-like ceremony involving anything other than the union of one man with one woman" (Section 537).

A statement of the OMB declared that the president "strongly" objected to the provisions because they "adopt unnecessary and ill-advised policies that would inhibit the ability of same-sex couples to marry or enter a recognized relationship under State law." As for Section 536, the OMB protested that it "would prohibit all personnel-related actions based on certain religious and moral beliefs," an obstacle "to good order and discipline." And under Section 537, said the OMB, the Department of Defense would be obligated "to deny Service members, retirees, and their family members access to facilities for religious ceremonies on the basis of sexual orientation, a troublesome and potentially unconstitutional limitation on religious liberty."

Crews noted that Obama's aggressive efforts to force the acceptance of homosexuality in the military



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“has created an environment in the Department of Defense that if you are in favor of same-sex relationships, you may speak. If you are not in favor, you cannot speak.” He said his group had seen examples of the persecution of Christian chaplains, with one chaplain pulled from an assignment and threatened with early retirement after he criticized the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.”

Tony Perkins of the [Family Research Council](#), one of the key conservative Christian groups that has gone to bat for chaplains and service members concerned about religious liberty in the military, called it “shocking that the administration would say this [amendment] would undermine good order and discipline, when in fact, it is the President’s policy that is leading to the undermining of good order and discipline. This measure is a response to the concerns raised by chaplains already as this new experimentation on homosexuality has been thrust upon the military.”



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