



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on February 15, 2013

Pentagon to Extend Benefits to Same-Sex Partners of Military Personnel

The Defense Department [announced February 11](#) that domestic partners of homosexual personnel will qualify for some of the more mundane domestic partnership benefits available to married couples — although, for the time being, they will be denied the important ones such as medical and dental coverage, along with housing allowances. While congressional repeal of the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” ban allows homosexuals to serve openly in the armed forces, the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), which defines marriage for federal purposes as only between a man and a woman, still disqualifies their “significant others” from cashing in on lucrative benefits.



The new military same-sex partner benefits, which must be released no later than October 1, 2013, will give homosexual partners ID cards similar to existing cards issued to dependents of military personnel, and will give the bearers access to military commissaries, gymnasiums and health clubs, movie theaters, and various family support programs available on military bases. Under the benefits homosexual partners could also qualify to fly on military transports on a “space available” basis. These new benefits are not fully equal to those received by spouses of heterosexual married service members — they cannot be unless the Supreme Court rules DOMA unconstitutional. “Additional benefits, such as health care and housing allowances, are by statute currently only available to spouses and therefore cannot be made available to same-sex domestic partners of service members under current law,” Defense Secretary Leon Panetta apologetically explained in a [memo](#) released February 11 by the Pentagon. But, he added, in “the event that the Defense of Marriage Act is no longer applicable to the Department of Defense, it will be the policy of the department to construe the words ‘spouse’ and ‘marriage’ without regard to sexual orientation, and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 sexual orientation, and their dependents will be granted full military benefits.”

“Discrimination based on sexual orientation no longer has a place in the military,” wrote Panetta in the memo. “Today, our military leaders are ensuring that all America’s sons and daughters who volunteer to serve our nation in uniform are treated with equal dignity and respect, regardless of their sexual orientation.”

The token act, meant by the Obama administration as a downpayment on the full package of benefits homosexual activists are demanding, prompted announcements of reserved applause from gay activists. “The Pentagon took a historic step forward toward righting the wrong of inequality in our armed forces,” said Chad Griffin of the Human Rights Campaign. “But,” he urged, “there is still more work to be done.”

Similarly, Outserve-SLDN, a group pushing for increased military concessions for homosexuals, thanked



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Panetta for his undying efforts on the behalf of gay soldiers. While pointing out that the announced benefits don't include some "important items" such as allowing for the burial of homosexual partners at national military cemeteries, Outserve spokesman Allyson Robinson acknowledged that the Pentagon did its best in light of the DOMA law.

Most importantly, Robinson noted, Panetta's announcement represented a big political promise kept by Obama to his significant homosexual voting bloc. "We thank him for getting us a few steps closer to full equality," Robinson said, "steps that will substantively improve the quality of life of gay and lesbian military families."

By contrast, the pro-military [Chaplain Alliance for Religious Liberty](#) expressed its dismay over Panetta's announcement. "It is an outrage that the Department of Defense would provide benefits to an unknown number of persons, at significant cost to the military, at a time when the military's budget is being reduced," said Col. Ron Crews, a retired chaplain with the U.S. Army Reserve and the group's executive director. "It is even worse that this is being done without consulting Congress." Crews declared that the policy "makes a mockery of the Defense of Marriage Act that is still the law of this nation."

Panetta's pro-gay policy announcement met with intense criticism from conservative lawmakers fighting to protect both traditional marriage and the nation's defense structure. "Once again, the President is eroding our military's apolitical stance and forcing conformity onto the rest of society by pushing his liberal social agenda through the Department of Defense," said Senator Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.), ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee. Inhofe called the move a "slippery slope," noting that the Defense Department is equating same-sex domestic partners with military spouses, while conveniently denying the same benefits to cohabiting heterosexual military couples.

"The Department of Defense is essentially creating a new class of beneficiary that will increase costs and demand for limited resources that are currently available for military families, active and reserve forces, and retirees," Inhofe charged. "President Obama continues to expand the government's financial obligations to support his liberal social agenda during a time when this Administration has imposed drastic budget cuts to our military readiness and national security."

Photo of Defense Secretary Leon Panetta: AP Images



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