



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on November 19, 2010

Lame Duck Congress to Vote on DREAM Act, Defense Issues

A lame duck session of Congress — already considering the Food Safety Act — will vote on the DREAM Act related to immigration as well as the U.S. Defense Authorization bill, “Don’t ask, don’t tell,” and the new START treaty if Harry Reid and Nancy Pelosi get their way.



A lame duck session of Congress takes place between the election of Congress in the first week of November and the seating of the newly elected congressmen and senators during the first week of January. The results of the midterm elections mean that the majority in the House of Representatives will change from Democratic to Republican in January.

Political observers have speculated that passage of these bills especially the repeal of the Defense Department’s policy of don’t ask, don’t tell for members of the U.S. military on the issue of homosexuality will be much more difficult for the Obama administration in January.

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We need to repeal this discriminatory policy so that any American who wants to defend our country can do so, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid wrote in a [press release](#) on his Senate website.

In this quest for the repeal of don’t ask, don’t tell, Reid can count on the support of an increasingly politicized Department of Defense under President Obama. Defense Department spokesman Geoff Morrell [told reporters](#) November 18:

We are a member of this administration and this President had made a call, as I understand it, to Sen. Levin this week and Sen Reid I believe as well, making it clear he wants to see the repeal of Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell attached to the National Defense Authorization Act and that’s what we as an administration are pushing for, and we certainly see the merit in using that as the legislative vehicle to ultimately get to repeal.

Reid and Pelosi are [also seeking passage](#) of:

- **DREAM Act:** President Obama has described the DREAM Act ([Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act of 2009](#)) as a down payment on his intention to enact comprehensive immigration reform. The bill is a true down payment in that taxpayers would be required to pay for the education of the illegal immigrants at state schools at tuition rates reserved for in-state students. The Congressional Research Service notes that the bill would repeal the provision [in existing law] making unlawful aliens ineligible for higher education benefits based on state residence unless a U.S. citizen or national is eligible for such benefits without regard to state residence. The DREAM Act may be a financial down



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payment, but because it allows many illegal immigrants a path to amnesty, many Republicans see it as the last payment in what they can expect on immigration legislation from the Obama administration.

- **New START:** This [New START](#) follow-up on the third START treaty (Strategic Arms Reduction Talks) would reduce the number of nuclear weapons possessed by the United States and Russia if the Russian Duma ratifies the treaty and the two-thirds of the U.S. Senate does likewise.
- **Defense Authorization Act:** The [regular annual legislation](#) to set policy for the Department of Defense didn't pass Congress this year because of many controversial issues, such as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, in addition to the don't ask, don't tell policy. Reid is looking to get this legislation passed in the lame duck session as well.

Photo: President Obama with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi of Calif., the president, Democrat Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid of Nev., June 10, 2010: AP Images



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