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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3603

July 24, 2012

The Honorable Leon Panetta
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Room 3E880
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Panetta,

I write to you to obtain clarification about the waiver you recently authorized to a Department of Defense (DOD) Directive that allowed service members in uniform to participate in a political activity. Based on the current standing DOD Directive 1344.10 and separate service department regulations, service members "shall not march or ride in a partisan political parade." These directives and regulations are unambiguous and straight forward with the intent of preserving the military's apolitical stance. This apolitical stance has served our military well and earned the respect of not just Americans but nations around the world as being a professional organization, set aside from politics and agendas.

The reversal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" allows U.S. service members to openly serve in our military. However, allowing service members to participate in a gay pride parade, while in uniform, is expressly prohibited by DOD policy. Under the current policy, DOD has used administrative action against active duty members that have participated in other political activities while in uniform. If the Navy can punish a Chaplain for participating in a pro-life event or a Marine participating in a political rally, it stands to reason that DOD should maintain the same standard and preclude service members in uniform from marching in a gay pride parade.

I respectfully request a detailed explanation of the rationale you used to grant this 'one time waiver' of DOD policy, who requested the waiver, why this waiver was considered justified over other requests, and whether you are considering other exceptions to current policy.

Sincerely,



James M. Inhofe
United States Senator