

U.S. Rep. Pocan: Reintroduces legislation to restore honor to service members discharged due to sexual orientation

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WASHINGTON, D.C.— On the 10th anniversary of the repeal of the shameful policy of Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT), **U.S. Representative Mark Pocan (WI-02)** reintroduced the Restore Honor to Service Members Act, legislation that corrects the military records of service members discharged solely due to their sexual orientation to reflect their honorable service and reinstate the benefits they earned.

*"All servicemembers who proudly served our country deserve the benefits they are entitled to, regardless of their sexual orientation," **Congressman Pocan said.** "It is past time that Congress and the Department of Defense correct past injustices by restoring benefits to all LGBTQIA+ service members who served our nation honorably."*

The Department of Veteran Affairs issued a directive today that seeks to restore benefits of service members discharged under DADT. The directive underscores the need to codify LGBTQIA+ servicemember outreach and benefits into law by passing the Restore Honor to Service Members Act.

Since World War II, more than 100,000 Americans are estimated to have been discharged from the military because of their sexual orientation. Those forced out of

the military may have left with discharge statuses of “other than honorable,” “general discharge” or “dishonorable,” depending on the circumstances. As a consequence, many of these service members may be disqualified from accessing certain benefits that they earned and are entitled to and may not be able to claim veteran status. The consequences of a negative discharge also include preventing some veterans from voting or making it more difficult for them to acquire civilian employment.

Many veterans who were affected by discriminatory policies such as Don't Ask, Don't Tell do not know that they can have their records corrected or initiate a review. This legislation would require the Department of Defense to reach out to veterans who faced discrimination because of their sexual orientation about the Department's process for correcting their records.

The legislation is endorsed by For All Vets, PFLAG, Unitarian Universalist Association, and VoteVets. The bill has 68 original cosponsors in the U.S. House of Representatives.