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SPARTA to Hagel: “Keep Your Promise” to Review Outdated Transgender Policy Before Departing

Group Commends Secretary Hagel for Support of LGBT Troops, Families

Washington, DC – SPARTA, the national organization of LGBT members of the U.S. armed forces and their families, commended Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel for his service on behalf of lesbian, gay, and bisexual service members and their families, while calling upon him to initiate immediately a promised review of the outdated policy prohibiting transgender Americans from serving. The White House announced earlier today that Secretary Hagel will be leaving his post, but will remain in place while his successor is nominated and confirmed.

“Secretary Hagel’s leadership has been critical to the steady progress LGBT service members and their families have experienced during his tenure, and we commend him for living up to his belief that ‘Every qualified American who wants to serve our country should have the opportunity to serve,’” said Allyson Robinson, Army veteran and SPARTA Director of Policy. “In his remaining days in office, we call upon him to uphold those values by initiating a review of the Department of Defense’s obsolete policies that bar fully qualified transgender Americans from serving. Mr. Secretary, six months ago you promised 15,000 transgender service members and their families a review would happen. We expect you to keep your promise to them.”

Robinson also highlighted the lack of nondiscrimination and equal opportunity protections for lesbian, gay, and bisexual service members, over three years after the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.” “It’s past time for the Pentagon to bring itself in line with nearly every other federal agency and protect its lesbian, gay, and bisexual troops from discrimination,” said Robinson.

In May, when questioned by ABC News’ Martha Raddatz whether current DOD policies, which date to the 1970’s, should be reviewed, Hagel responded “I do think it -- it continually should be reviewed. I’m open to that, by the way. I’m open to those assessments, because, again, I go back to the bottom line. Every qualified American who wants to serve our country should have an opportunity if they fit the qualifications and can do it.” He clarified his comments, two days later, saying, “I would want to hear more from individuals who are close to this issue, know this issue, who I would value their judgment and their direction on.”

Since that time, SPARTA has developed specific resources and provided expertise and analysis to Pentagon officials in support of the promised policy review.

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About SPARTA: SPARTA is an association of LGBT people who currently serve or have served in the military, along with our families and our veteran and uniformed allies. We are a membership organization, built by, for and with members from all parts of the LGBT military community. SPARTA’s mission is to advocate for and support our actively serving LGBT military members and veterans, and their families.

The name originated from the acronym Servicemembers, Partners, and Allies for Respect and Tolerance for All.

