

CRWG Family Small Focus Group Script

BRIEFING

Good morning/afternoon. My name is _____ and this is _____. We are with the Department of Defense Comprehensive Review Working Group (CRWG). This is the working group the Secretary of Defense directed to examine the issues associated with a repeal of the law known as “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.” Let me define this law, so that we have a common understanding. The “Don’t Ask” part means that Service members aren’t asked their sexual orientation when they join the military and commanders are only allowed to ask if there is credible information that a Service member engaged in homosexual conduct. The “Don’t Tell” part means that if Service members reveal their homosexual relationships or sexual orientation, they will be discharged. We have asked you here to gain your perspective on issues, if any, associated with a repeal of this law. Your help is essential to our review.

This is a **voluntary focus group**. If you prefer not to sit in on this focus group, you are free to leave or to sit quietly while others participate.

- Let’s begin by talking about why we are conducting focus groups. In his State of the Union Address, the President called on Congress to repeal the law commonly known as “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.” Repeal would mean that Service members would no longer be separated from the armed forces because they have engaged in homosexual conduct, which includes saying they are gay. The CRWG is conducting this study to examine the issues associated with a repeal of the law and will include an implementation plan, if a repeal were to occur. To do this, we will be getting your views today about how you think a repeal would affect your spouse’s military service, the military environment, and your family, and what issues you think leadership should address first if a repeal were to occur. This focus group is an opportunity for you to share your insights directly with the military’s senior leadership.

I want to thank you in advance for participating in this important focus group and go over a few ground rules:

- First, and most important, this is not a confidential forum so please do *not* identify the sexual orientation of anyone currently serving in the military. The “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” law is still in effect and could affect a military member’s service if it were revealed he/she is gay or lesbian. Are there any questions about this before we move on?
- Please respect each others’ opinions. We know you may have different perspectives on issues covered in this focus group. We want to hear those views—that’s why we are here today. We urge you to be open and honest.

FOUO: Draft/Predecisional

- If you don't feel you have anything to contribute, there's no pressure for you to do so. _____ will be helping us to take notes. We will record comments but will not record names or other identifying information. Only an analysis and summary of the data will go in our report.
- Though this is not a confidential forum, we will not be recording or noting in any summary reports who made which comments. After you leave today's session, please do not discuss what was said here with anyone including the media. This will help us protect the information shared today. Please turn off cell phones and other recording devices.
- Please speak one at a time and allow others their opportunity to speak so that everyone can contribute his/her thoughts. Also please do not engage in any side conversations. Any (additional) questions?
- I have several questions to ask you today. I will watch the time so we will be able to cover all questions and keep this session to one hour.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE WITH GAYS AND LESBIANS

1. Let's begin with a show of hands. How many of you have a close personal relationship with someone who is gay, lesbian, or bisexual? (Facilitator notes percentage of the group.)

POSSIBLE ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH REPEAL

Let's now discuss some of the possible issues associated with repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." Some questions are related to your spouse's military service and others are about issues that affect you and your family.

2. What concerns do you have about your spouse's military service if the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" law were repealed? [PROBE AS NEEDED BELOW]
 - o In the past, when women were integrated into the military, some military spouses were concerned that working in close proximity with active duty women might undermine existing military marriages or that the presence of women could compromise their husbands' safety. Would there be similar concerns for you if the DADT law were repealed?
 - o In what ways do you think that the open presence of gays and lesbians would be the same or different from the presence of women in the military?
 - o Is there anything you believe is unique to the issue of integrating gays and lesbians into the military that is not true for other groups?

RETENTION/RECRUITMENT

3. Again, I would like a show of hands. If the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” law was repealed, and gays and lesbians were permitted to serve without fear of being separated from the military, would that affect your spouse’s decision to stay in or get out of the military? Explain.
 - o Would repeal of the law affect your support for your spouse staying in or getting out of the military? Explain.
4. Would a repeal of the law change your willingness to recommend military service to someone who is considering joining? Or would repeal have no impact on your recommendation? Explain.

ISSUES FOR FAMILY LIFE

5. Now let’s turn to concerns you might have for your family life following a repeal of the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” law. What are your concerns about the integration of gay and lesbian partners into the military community?

PROBES IF NEEDED

- o Do you think a repeal would have any impact on your children? Explain.
 - o Would a repeal impact your attendance at social events? Explain.
 - o If gay and lesbian partners were included in family readiness groups, would that affect your attendance?
 - o Would your participation in a family readiness group change if it was being led by a gay or lesbian?
6. Repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” will not result in the receipt of military benefits by gay and lesbian partners because the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) still applies and this law prohibits the Federal government from recognizing same-sex marriages. Aside from benefits such as medical, dental, or housing, are there other aspects of being a military spouse that we need to consider for partners of gays and lesbians? PROBES:
 - o Next of Kin notification
 - o Compassion in medical situations
 - o Transferring of GI benefits?

CHAPLAIN SERVICES

7. One issue often raised in forums such as this involves the impact on chaplains. There are chaplains on the Working Group who are focusing on this issue. How concerned are you that a repeal would impact the military's ability to provide chaplains who represent your belief structure? Explain.

SUMMARY QUESTIONS

8. [ONLY ASK IF POSITIVE ASPECTS NOT ADDRESSED ABOVE] We have focused on some of the concerns you might have if the law were repealed. What positive effects can you think of if gay Service members no longer had to hide their sexual orientation?
9. We have discussed several issues today, including ____, ____, and _____. What do you think should be the first priority for leaders to address? Why?
10. Is there anything else you would like to share with us about this issue that we have not already addressed?

CLOSING REMARKS

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this focus group. As I mentioned at the beginning, we will not attribute any of your comments to any specific individuals. We will not link your name to any of the specific comments you made today. Please also respect that non-attribution when you leave here today. Our goal is to provide the best data possible and you have helped us greatly today with your comments and insights. Thank you again for your participation.