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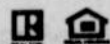
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Sergeant Comes Out

Army Sgt. Darren Manzella, a medic from Portland, N.Y., who received a combat medical badge for his service in Iraq, has come out publicly and, so far, without consequence.

Manzella appeared in several national interviews and held press conferences Jan. 7 and 8, speaking out against the military's "don't ask, don't tell" ban on service by gays.

"It has never affected my job performance before. I don't think it will make a difference now. And to be honest since then, I don't see a difference because of my homosexuality," Manzella said.

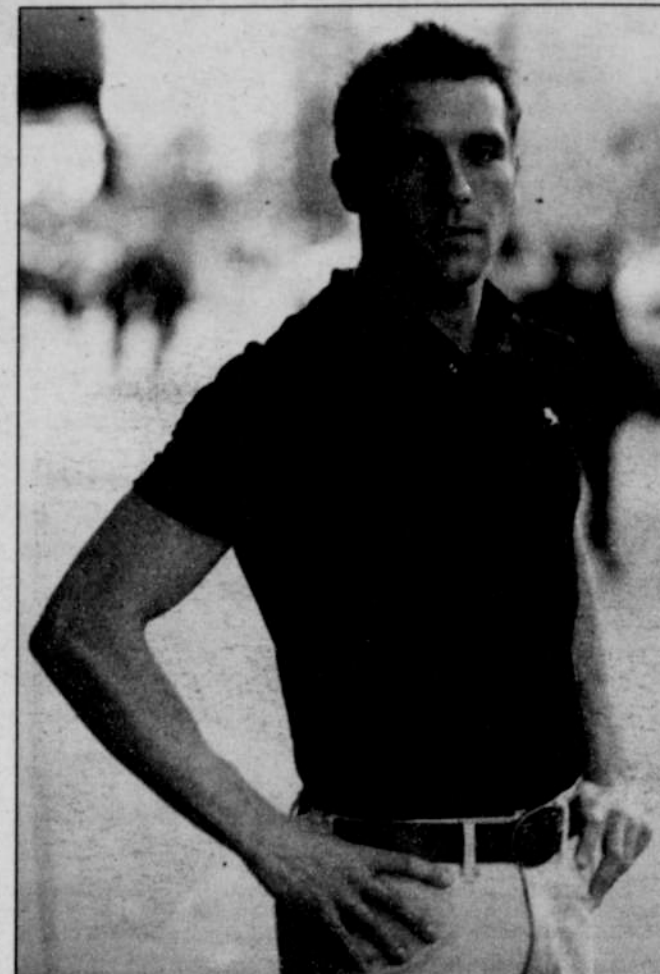
Aubrey Sarvis, executive director of Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, said the case demonstrates the military is arbitrarily enforcing its "don't ask, don't tell" policy now that the country is at war.

Although the military has yet to raise the issue with Manzella, he could still be investigated, and every public announcement that he is gay could be counted as a violation of the policy.

Manzella said he first told a military supervisor that he is gay in August 2006 while stationed in Fort Hood, Texas. Three weeks after that incident, his battalion commander said an investigation on the matter was closed because of a lack of proof.

Manzella has been on a short leave and will return to the 1st Cavalry Division at Fort Hood at the end of January.

A bill to eliminate the military's anti-gay policy, filed by Rep. Ellen Tauscher, D-Calif., is pending in Congress. Insiders do not expect the legislation to get out of committee during this election year, but hearings could be held.



Army Sgt. Darren Manzella has challenged the military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy by coming out publicly.

The meeting was an effort to build community with transgender people after a fallout concerning the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA). While HRC had formerly gone on record as supporting a law that provided protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity, it changed that position once Rep. Barney Frank, D-Mass., and other lawmakers believed there were not enough votes for a trans-inclusive version to pass out of the House of Representatives.

Some members of the trans community felt abandoned by HRC, as it stood silently for several days before affirming its 2004 position for an inclusive ENDA. However, in a statement, HRC said it would not lobby members of Congress against voting for the new version of the bill that contained protections based on sexual orientation only.

The noninclusive version of ENDA passed the House in early November. The legislation now moves to the Senate.

According to *The Washington Blade*, Sen. Ted Kennedy, D-Mass., wanted a vote on ENDA in 2008, but Solmonese said Jan. 7 that he was unsure when a vote would take place.

Solmonese said Sparks' award is in possession of David Smith, HRC's vice president. Smith told Sparks that he hopes the award can be represented to her.

CALIFORNIA

Trans Leader Snubs HRC

The transgender president of the San Francisco Police Commission, Theresa Sparks, returned the Equality Award she received in 2004 from the Human Rights Campaign at a Jan. 5 meeting between members of the Bay Area trans community and HRC president Joe Solmonese.

"It no longer symbolized equality to me," Sparks told *The Bay Area Reporter*. "It's a matter of their integrity and not following through and my own integrity."



Theresa Sparks, president of the San Francisco Police Commission, returned an award because she believes the Human Rights Campaign betrayed the transgender community.

IDAHO

Craig Tries New Defense

Sen. Larry Craig, R-Idaho, has a new defense strategy.

He is claiming the undercover police officer who busted him in the infamous gay sex sting at a Minneapolis airport bathroom stall started it. According to Minnesota's disorderly conduct statute, the action in questions must alarm or anger others.

In a brief filed Jan. 8, lawyers claim the officer couldn't have been offended by Craig's foot tapping because the officer invited the action with his own foot tapping. Those lawyers also contend Craig should have his guilty plea to a disorderly conduct charge thrown out because what he did last June wasn't a crime.

Despite Craig's voluntary guilty plea, if the facts