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DADT

Repeal Reaction

Portland advocates sound off on DADT repeal

BY RYAN J. PRADO

With a 65-31 vote in the United States Senate Saturday, December 18, an entire year's worth of advocacy, protest, resistance, filibusters and reviews came to at least a temporary halt when a stand-alone repeal bill for "Don't ask, don't tell" was approved. Following two separate GOP-led filibusters in the Senate—one in September and one coming just days before the stand-alone bill was introduced and pushed through the House—equality activists rejoiced the end of the 17-year-old ban against gays serving openly in the U.S. Armed Forces.

It was a hard-fought battle for repeal advocates like Defense Secretary Robert Gates, whose Department of Defense completed a review of the effects repeal of DADT might have on the nation's military readiness. The yearlong review concluded that "some limited and isolated disruption to unit cohesion and retention" could occur but that the effects would not be long lasting or widespread. The findings

cushioned a swifter call to action in the lame duck session of Congress and the Senate, and President Barack Obama signed the bill into law on Wednesday, December 22.

Still, as advocacy groups warned in the days following the president's historic signing, repeal will not immediately go into effect until the government goes through additional steps to roll back the old policy. This means that for the time being, gay servicemembers are being encouraged not to reveal themselves, as they would still be vulnerable to

discharge until Pentagon officials complete mandatory implementation plans. Obama stated during a speech prior to the signing of the bill that his administration would not be "dragging our feet to get this done."

In Portland, and Oregon at large, support for repeal was widespread, especially from entities such as Veterans for Human Rights and the Human Rights Campaign's Portland Steering Committee. Local veterans discharged under DADT expressed the familiar sentiment that this vote was long overdue.

"I am happy that the gay community is now

legally allowed to serve openly and without fear," said Sharon Murtagh, whose moving speech at an HRC brunch in August roused sympathy for those who were forced to lie about their sexuality to stay in the military. "We as a community may now honor a principle and duty as citizens of our country without fear of dismissal. We owe it to everyone who served in silence and fear, or died in

"I was an Apache helicopter mechanic and I could never understand how my sexual orientation affected my ability to perform my job and the ability to serve my country."

-SHORTY MOLES

silence, to remember it was their strength and honor that moved our country to end DADT."

Portland photographer Shorty Moles was discharged under DADT while serving in Afghanistan after being harassed for months by her command.

"I was an Apache helicopter mechanic and I could never understand how my sexual orientation affected my ability to perform my job and the ability to serve my country," said Moles.

Before President Bill Clinton settled for



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