politics-

At Their Service

Portland equality groups recognize DADT repeal with day of events

BY RYAN J. PRADO

After nearly 18 years under the controversial and discriminatory policy known as "Don't ask, don't tell," United States soldiers are on the precipice of legally serving openly in the armed forces. Full repeal of the Clinton-era policy, issued in December 1993, occurs Tuesday, September 20. More than 13,500 service members have been discharged under the military ban on gays and lesbians serving openly, many of whom have expressed a desire to re-enlist after repeal.

Wash.-based Veterans for Human Rights, as well as the Human Rights Campaign's Port- support base for soldiers. land Steering Committee and Q Center, are organizing celebratory events to mark the occasion. VfHR has worked tirelessly, along with ers," Freed explains. "I knew of a few that national LGBT veterans support organizations resigned their commission rather like the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, in reporting and engaging the public on the issues facing the long haul toward repeal of War veteran of the U.S. Army DADT. Now, for the first time, those behind Signal Corps, serving from 1990 the scenes of these organizations are able to to 1994. Koperski, a member of look on the policy from the rearview mirror.

"Being involved with Veterans for Human at the VA Northwest Health Net-Rights has allowed me to see the effect that work, served on active duty during many service members went through being outed and discharged," explains VfHR treasurer James Freed. "The pain of being denied to serve your country as you swore to do when enlisting was detrimental."

Freed wasn't out during his career as a civilian worker for the Air Force, and says he only a situation where I had to lie about whom and service providers are expected to attend "Stand" information or to volunteer for the CC Slaughters realized his orientation in college after he was what I was in order to keep my friends and Down," and Medical Teams International will celebration, call Robert Irwin at 503-875-3174.

should now have the support of their co-workthan leave their partners behind."

Dan Koperski is a Gulf VfHR and now an administrator the time that DADT was implemented. He it posed for service members firsthand.

cohesion and morale of the soldiers in my unit, ans and their families. it turned them against one another and created

discharged. But he says he did work with gay job," Koperski explains. "I hope that with this Here in the Northwest, the Vancouver, active duty personnel who were not allowed to repeal, the stigma and frustrations that many recognize their partners—erasing a critical GLBT Americans face will be lifted. I was honored to be given the chance to serve our "With the repeal of DADT, these families country as a GLBT American and fully sup-United States to do the same."

> Freed will be on hand September 20 during the annual "Veterans Stand Down" event, an effort cern, the Department of Veter-

says he witnessed the problems and difficulties Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.) from 9 a.m. to 4 as scheduled. p.m. as an event primarily for homeless veterans, "Not only was DADT debilitating to the but also features a job fair for all military veter-

More than 50 potential employers and 70

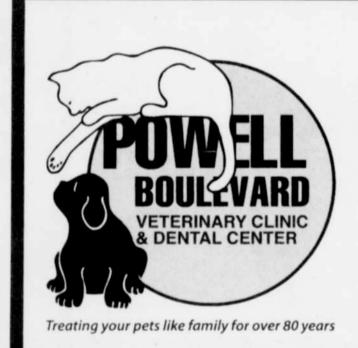
be on site with their dental van, providing allday free dental care.

"Stand Down" is one among a day of celebratory events, themed "As American As Apple Pie," set for Tuesday, September 20. Along with a press conference and Color Guard presentation at Portland City Hall at 11:30 a.m., a DADT Repeal Celebration and Remembrance event at Q Center (4115 N. Mississippi) will run from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., featuring appearances by Mayor Sam Adams and representatives from HRC Portland and VfHR. From 6 to 7 p.m., KBOO Community Radio will broadcast live from the event.

Before and/or after the Q Center reception, port the rights of each and every citizen of the revelers can head to CC Slaughters (219 NW Davis) for another Repeal Celebration Party in partnership with the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, beginning at 3 p.m., with happy hour extended to 9 p.m. There is no cover, though presented by Central City Condonations to the SLDN are strongly encouraged.

As Just Out went to print, it was announced ans Affairs, Returning Veterans that House Armed Services Committee Chair-Project, Oregon Paralyzed Veter- man Rep. Buck McKeon (R-Calif.) and Rep. ans of America and WorkSource Joe Wilson (R-S.C.) drafted a letter arguing Oregon. "Stand Down" takes place at for a delay of DADT repeal. The Pentagon, the Oregon Convention Center (777 NE however, insisted that repeal would commence

> For more information about DADT repeal events, visit pdxqcenter.org, contact VfHR's Ron Rasmussen at 360-896-9394, or visit vfbr.org. For more



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