

LAW & JUSTICE

Reversal of Military Gay Ban Blocked

Vote to end discriminatory law fall short

(AP) -- Republicans blocked a last-ditch effort in the Senate to lift the military's ban on openly gay troops last week, dealing a major blow to gay rights groups and making it unlikely Congress could repeal "don't ask, don't tell" any time soon.

U.S. Jeff Merkley, D-Ore., said he was deeply disappointed in the Senate's failure to repeal the discriminatory law.

"For the second time this year, Senate Republicans have disre-

garded the opinions of the nation's top military leaders, including Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Mike Mullen, and voted to block the repeal of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell.'

"I've said it before and I'll say it again, the brave men and women who serve in the American Armed Forces should never have to lie about their sexual orientation in order to serve their country. 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' is a discriminatory policy that weakens our military readiness by eliminating qualified personnel," Merkley said.

The 57-40 vote fell three short of the 60 needed to overcome procedural hurdles to lift the 17-year-old ban. Sen. Susan Collins of Maine



Jeff Merkley

was the lone Republican voting to advance the bill, and Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia was the only Democrat to vote against it.

The rejection was a defeat for President Barack Obama, who campaigned promising to overturn the law and later called it one of his top legislative priorities for the year. But in recent weeks the White House has done little to push the legislation, focusing its influence instead on tax cuts and a nuclear arms treaty with Russia.

Obama wasn't giving up. He said the ban "weakens our national security, diminishes our military readiness and violates fundamental American principles of fairness, integrity and equality." And he said repeal is supported by the military and the American people.

"I urge the Senate to revisit these important issues during the lame

duck session," he said.

Gay rights advocates were furious because the Senate vote failed largely because of a procedural disagreement.

"Instead of doing what is right, the world's greatest deliberative body devolved into shameful school yard spats that put petty partisan politics above the needs of our women and men in uniform," said Joe Solmonese, president of the Human Rights Campaign, a gay rights group.

The 1993 law bans gay troops from publicly acknowledging their sexual orientation. A repeal provision was included in a broader defense policy bill and passed last spring in the House.

Worst Charities Do Little to Help Needy

Donors should avoid irresponsible non-profits

Now that the gift-giving season is upon us, Attorney General John Kroger is releasing a list of Oregon's 20 Worst Charities, offering tips to consumers on donating wisely and unveiling a landmark legislative proposal to combat unscrupulous non-profits.

"It is important that generous Oregonians make charitable contributions to legitimate organizations," Kroger said. "Many charities do great work, but some are little more than scams that do little to help the people they claim to support."

In addition to increasing consumer awareness, Attorney General Kroger will ask the 2011 Legislature to pass a law making Oregon the first state in the country to use the tax code to fight charities that spend most of the money they raise

on telemarketers and administration. The proposal will eliminate the Oregon tax deduction for donations to charities that spend less than 30 percent of the money they raise on the people they claim to support.

"This proposal will help kick sham charities out of Oregon," said Kroger. "If the rest of the country follows Oregon's lead, we could end the rampant abuse of non-profit laws."

State law requires charities to file periodic financial reports with the Oregon Department of Justice disclosing how much money the organization raised and how the funds were spent. The Department's Charitable Activities Section has identified 20 organizations that spent more than 75 percent of the donations they collected on administrative

costs and professional fundraising.

While guidelines issued by the Better Business Bureau (BBB) suggest that charitable organizations should spend at least 65 percent of their funds on charitable programs, every charity on the Department of Justice's list devoted less than 25 percent of their expenditures on charitable program activities.

At the top of the list is Shiloh International Ministries, which claims to solicit money to provide medical necessities and moral support to needy children and to provide assistance to the homeless. According to the most recent financial filings, the California-based non-profit spent an average of \$937,315 per year, 96.37 percent of which went to management and fundraising.

No. 2 on the list is Law Enforcement Education Program, which supposedly raises money to educate teenagers on the effects of alcohol. The Michigan-based non-profit spent just 6.26 percent of the annual average \$1,893,929 it raised on charitable purposes.

The Korean War Veterans National Museum and Library was one of many groups on the list that says it raises money to help veterans. The Illinois-based group spent 96.97 percent of the annual average \$2,265,809 it raised on telemarketing and administration.

Kroger cannot dictate how charities spend your money, but he is providing Oregonians some basic advice to ensure your gifts go to a worthy cause.

Before donating, it is important to make sure the organization is registered with the Attorney

General's Office by searching the Department's online database or by calling 971-673-1880. You can also visit www.guidestar.org, a national clearinghouse of information on charities and their performance.

Attorney General Kroger also cautions Oregonians to watch out for solicitations that thank you for your previous support and charities that send invoices claiming you made a recent pledge when you didn't. These methods are intentionally confusing and dishonest ways to gain donations.

Consumers are advised against giving out their personal information over the phone. Legitimate charities will accept contributions by check, which should always be made payable to the organization not the individual collecting the donation.

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