



"Don't Ask, Don't Tell" Costs Taxpayers an Estimated \$363.8 Million

By GayWebMonkey.com

Washington, D.C. - A new Blue Ribbon Commission of military experts estimates the total cost of implementing the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" law to be \$363.8 million between 1994 and 2003, a 91% increase from a February 2005 Government Accountability Office (GAO) estimate.

The report, "Financial Analysis of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell,'" was released through the Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military (CSSMM) at UC-Santa Barbara. It recalculates the cost of the law banning openly lesbian, gay, and bisexual service members by examining the oversights of the 2005 GAO report, which estimated the cost of the ban to be \$190.5 million.

"Don't Ask, Don't Tell' places an unnecessary burden on American taxpayers by asking them to fund a discriminatory law that hurts military readiness," said C. Dixon Osburn, Executive Director of Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (SLDN). "The choice is clear: spend \$364 million on firing patriotic Americans or spend the same amount on three dozen Blackhawk helicopters, 4,000 sidewinder missiles, or enough body armor vests to outfit the entire American fighting force in Iraq. Our priority should always be defense and national security. Congress should repeal 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' immediately and fund real priorities in the war on terror."

Members of the Blue Ribbon Commission include prominent defense policymakers and researchers such as the Honorable William J. Perry, former Secretary of Defense; Dr. Lawrence J. Korb, former Assistant Secretary of Defense and a member of SLDN's Honorary Board; Admiral John D. Hutson, USN (Ret.); and Professor Aaron Belkin at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Their report attempts to address the oversights in the 2005 GAO report and correct the under- and over-estimation of costs in training and replacing personnel discharged under the gay ban. The figure put forward by the Blue Ribbon Commission includes costs of enlisted recruiting and training, officer training and separation travel.

The Blue Ribbon Commission acknowledged in their report that the estimate of \$363.8 million should be seen as a conservative one. "Given that we were not able to include several cost categories in our estimate and that we used conservative assumptions to guide our research, our estimate of the cost of implementing ["Don't Ask, Don't Tell"] should be seen as a lower-bound estimate."

"The Blue Ribbon Commission of experts has given us the most accurate estimate of the law's price tag to date," Osburn said. "In addition to the \$364 million spent to implement a counter-productive law, however, since 1993, our nation has lost the talents and expertise of 10,000 lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender patriots who want to serve our nation. When we fire Arabic translators, helicopter pilots, combat engineers and troops on the ground simply because they are gay, every American pays the price."

The full report, including a listing of all Commission members, is available for download at www.sldn.org.