

REPEAL OF DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL Navy Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

FAQ – CHAPLAINS'

Does repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell affect the religious rights of chaplains?

No. Chaplains will continue to have freedom to practice their religion according to the tenets of their faith. In the context of their religious ministry, chaplains are not required to take actions that are inconsistent with their religious beliefs (e.g., altering the content of sermons or religious counseling, sharing a pulpit with other chaplains or modifying forms of prayer or worship).

Chaplains of all faiths care for all Service members and facilitate the free exercise of religion for all personnel, regardless of religious affiliation of either the chaplain or the individual.

Chaplains minister to Service members and provide advice to Commanding Officers on matters of religion, morals, ethics and morale in accordance with, and without compromising, the tenets or requirements of their faith. If, in chaplains' discharge of their broader duties within the unit, they are faced with an issue contrary to their individual faith, they may refer Sailors to other appropriate counsel.

(Support Plan for Implementation, Appendix D, Q6)

FAQ – EARLY DISCHARGE

Will the Department of Defense establish a new category of early release from service commitments for Service members based on moral, religious or other objections to the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell?

No. The Department of Defense does not permit the early discharge of Service members based upon their opposition to the repeal of any new policy. This includes Don't Ask, Don't Tell or objection to serving with or living in the company of any Service member.

Existing regulations allow Sailors with a service commitment to request early, voluntary discharge under the Secretary of the Navy's authority. Granting these types of requests is at the discretion of the Secretary of the Navy and is granted only when the early separation would be in the best interest of the Navy. Commanding Officers retain their current authority under existing Navy personnel management policies to assist personnel within their units who desire to separate from the Navy when in the best interest of the Navy, the unit and/or the individual in question. Sailors are advised to talk to their chain of command and/or seek legal assistance to ensure they understand the available options within the Navy for pursuing separation for any reason.

(Support Plan for Implementation, Appendix D, Q8)



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Navy Vignettes

VIGNETTE – CHAPLAINS

SITUATION: You are the supervisor of a Sailor who wants to file a complaint against a chaplain. She informs you that she attended a worship service at the base chapel over the weekend. The chaplain's sermon included several direct statements that homosexuality is a sin and that marriage should be only between a man and woman. She disagreed with the chaplain's remarks and felt they were biased and discriminatory and should not be allowed.

Issue: Moral and Religious Concerns. Can the Sailor file a complaint of discrimination or harassment against the chaplain? Should chaplains revise their sermons to avoid the perception of discrimination? What alternatives are available to assist the member or the chaplain?

Discussion: Chaplains have the right to express their religious beliefs during their conduct of a service of worship or religious study. Unless a chaplain's speech is otherwise prohibited, such as publically maligning senior leaders, their sermons and/or teachings cannot be restricted, even with regard to socially controversial topics. This situation is an excellent opportunity to have a discussion with the Sailor about religious respect and the proper boundaries of religious expression within the military. You could offer to meet with her and the chaplain to facilitate a discussion on the topic. If either the chaplain or the Sailor feels that due to their religious views, speech or practice, they have been improperly treated, redress is available through their chain of command, existing Navy policy or the Inspector General (IG) if necessary. Chaplains facilitate the free exercise of religion for all personnel, regardless of the religious affiliation of either the chaplain or the individual. At the same time, regulations also recognize that chaplains minister to members in accordance with, and without compromising, the tenets of their faith. These boundaries are not always clearly defined. Finally, the Service member may request assistance from the chaplain's office in finding a different religious service to attend.

(Support Plan for Implementation, Appendix D, V8)

VIGNETTE – EARLY DISCHARGE

SITUATION: You are the Recruiter in Charge (RINC) at a high tempo recruiting office. Your top notch, high performing recruiter has been doing a good job for the past couple of months after your discussion with him about the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell. He requested a reassignment but it was denied. The recruiter asks to see you and informs you that while he appreciates how the situation was handled, he has tried but he cannot resolve his personal beliefs with the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell. He has two years remaining on his current enlistment and wants to know how he can request an early separation.

Issue: Release from Service Commitments. What actions should the RINC take? Can the recruiter be released early from his service commitment?

