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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-6035

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PAUL ARCANGELI, STAFF DIRECTOR

December 15, 2010

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Majority Leader Reid and Speaker Pelosi:

As we enter the final days of the 111th Congress, we are concerned that you appear to have placed a higher priority on repealing "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" than actually passing the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2011. A spokesperson for Speaker Pelosi was quoted in the press this morning stating that "all options to repeal 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' are now on the table."

The defense authorization bill has been passed for 48 consecutive years in some form and is integral for our national security concerns and the welfare of our troops and their families. In fact, Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Ranking Member John McCain (R-Ariz.) forewarned of this eventuality during a speech on the Senate floor on September 16, 2010, when he addressed the unfortunate polarization of the National Defense Authorization Act.

Senator McCain stated, "Under this Majority Leader, we have witnessed the unfortunate and growing politicization of the National Defense Authorization Act... This is turning legislation related to our national defense and military preparedness into a vehicle to force a partisan agenda through the Senate, often on a party line vote..."

Senator McCain continued, "The effect of all this, Mr. President, is that the Majority Leader is turning legislation on our national defense into a political football: debate is limited and unrelated, politically controversial amendments are crowding out our limited time to debate actual military and defense-related legislation... This is only making it more likely that the National Defense Authorization Act will one day go the way of so many other authorization bills—which is to say, nowhere. This kind of transparent politicization of our national defense should anger every member of this body, Democrats and Republicans. The men and women of our armed services deserve better, and we should demand better."

Unfortunately, Senator McCain's prediction is playing out exactly as he calculated it might. Your stated goal of advancing legislation to repeal "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" ahead of the annual defense authorization bill is driving the politicization of the National Defense Authorization Act, and is indicative of a flawed process with misguided priorities. In a time of war, this is unconscionable. We agree with Senator McCain that the American people, and the men and women of our nation's Armed Forces, deserve and demand better.

Sincerely,

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