



Florida House of Representatives

Representative Rick Kriseman

District 53

District Office:

1700 66th Street North, Suite 203
St. Petersburg, FL 33710
(727) 552-1380
(727) 552-1382 (fax)

Tallahassee Office:

303 House Office Building
402 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399
(850) 488-9337

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 2, 2010

CONTACT: Kevin King

Rep. Rick Kriseman files military readiness bill urging the United States Congress to repeal "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. -- Florida State Representative Rick Kriseman (D-St. Petersburg) has filed House Memorial 1459 urging Congress to adopt and the President of United States to sign into law legislation that repeals the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy and institutes a policy of nondiscrimination based on sexual orientation with respect to service in the U.S. Military.

"It's past time to end the failed policy of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." There are nearly eighty thousand gay or lesbian veterans who live in Florida; brave men and women who served honorably, but also in fear. They deserved better, and today's service members deserve better. I urge our leaders in Washington, D.C. to move quickly in repealing this terribly ineffective law," said Representative Kriseman, who serves as a policy advisor to the House Democratic Caucus.

"Rick Kriseman joins our military's top leaders in recognizing that firing qualified service members based on anti-gay prejudice is both un-American and hurts our military's readiness. Those who choose to serve their country deserve respect, not discrimination," said Nadine Smith, executive director of Equality Florida.

More than 13,000 service members have been discharged under the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, including hundreds of service members in critical occupations, such as counterintelligence experts and medical specialists. Further, hundreds of language specialists have been discharged from military service under the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, including 55 Arabic translators and nine Farsi translators, all of which are vitally important positions to intelligence gathering and are positions for which there is a critical shortage of qualified personnel.

"My wife and I have two children. We want them to grow up in a safe world. I wish this for all Floridians. There's no doubt that this policy makes us less safe and compromises the readiness and expertise of our great military," said Representative Kriseman.

HM 1459 is the only such bill filed in the Florida Legislature this session. It now awaits a committee reference and hearing.

###