



THE *Forward Observer*

NATIONAL NEWSLETTER OF THE
American Veterans for Equal Rights

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Headline News: Backed by 52 others, Representative Martin Meehan (D-MA) Introduces the Military Readiness Enhancement Act of 2005. A Bill Which Could Signal The End of “*Don’t Ask Don’t Tell*”

(STORY BEGINS ON PAGE 3. BILL ON PAGE 19)



PHOTO COURTESY OF AVER NY CHAPTER SECRETARY TONY BRETON

AVER New York Chapter President Denny Meyer speaks after a hearing on whether or not New York City should adopt a resolution coming out against DADT. Flanking him are veteran and legendary activist Dr. Frank Kameny, (RIGHT) and openly out NYC Council Member Margarita Lopez (LEFT)

(STORY ON PAGE 6)



A Word from The President

It seems our earlier prediction and desire to see an end to *DADT* within the next five years was wrong. Thanks to our long-time ally, Rep. Martin Meehan (D-MA) and the now over 70 representatives who have come out in support of the Military Readiness Enhancement Act of 2005, we could very well see the end of *DADT* within the next year or so. Providing we take necessary action now, in order to ensure this much-needed change in our nation's policy occurs. More and more people are coming out in support of lifting the ban. Each and every one of us needs to be poised to lend a face and voice to whenever and wherever we can. Don't wait to be invited either. Actively seek out your local media outlets — gay and straight — and volunteer your story. Seize the chance to speak at every opportunity. Make sure other organizations in your community know how to get a hold of you for quotes, press releases, and speaking engagements. Have a readily available supply of business cards, brochures (both local and national) and anything else you can come up with to hand out. If you find yourself lacking in any of the aforementioned items, don't hesitate to ask for help. There is a plethora of everything from business cards to flyers that different chapters have come up with. As we become more and more organized, we'll eventually have a page on the website dedicated to nothing but media materials which you can download and alter to suite your independent chapter needs.

Pride Season will soon be upon us, for some, sooner than others. What better opportunity to reach out to others in our community? Memorial Day will be here soon as well. In addition to the wreath-laying at Arlington, there are other wreath-layings across the country that countless of you already participate in. Take a little extra time this year to sharpen up that uniform and to increase media-coverage for your event. There is also our yearly convention to begin making plans for. Start thinking of ways to raise money for chapter members to attend. And don't forget *SLDN Lobby Days*, scheduled to take place in conjunction with their annual *End the Witch Hunt Dinner*, which takes place this year beginning May 7.

It isn't too early to begin planning for Veterans Day events either. On the national level, we'll soon be asking for your helping in kicking off *AVER's* version of *National Coming Out Day*; an *AVER* created and sponsored *National Veteran Coming Out Day*, thought up and spearheaded by *NEOVAVER* chapter president and national webmaster, Marie Bohusch.

My point is, now is the for us to mobilize, while the iron is hot and the support is fired up. It is up to us — the men and women of *AVER* — to speak out loud and clear about the injustice of *DADT*. Now is the time to speak out for the estimated 65,000 GLBT servicemembers currently serving in our Armed Forces — to speak out for the estimated 1 million veterans who served their country in silence, with little or no recognition for the real people behind the years of dedicated service.

I am proud to have served to my country. As I am proud of each and every one of you. As your president, I'm asking you to join me in what could be *AVER's* finest moment. Mr. Meehan and the others can't do it by themselves. Neither can *SLDN* or the *Log Cabin Republicans*. Thanks to sources such as the recent GAO report and the soon-to-be-released Blue Ribbon Commission report due later out this year, we now have the necessary ammunition to prove what we've known all along; the colossal waste *DADT* has exacted upon our nation's military. All we need now are the artillery pieces to fire the ammunition. We are those artillery pieces. You are cleared to lock and load. This could very well be our only chance to see the end to this senseless, discriminatory policy — to finally win this battle we've all voluntarily undertaken.

To quote Admiral Farragut: *Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead!*

Semper Fi

A J Row



QUARTERDECK



GAO Report reveals staggering cost of DADT at over \$200 Million

According to figures released in a recent GAO report requested by several members of Congress concerned over the cost of *DADT*, the military has squandered \$200 million to replace personnel who've been discharged over the last ten years for being openly gay or lesbian. What the story doesn't reflect, however, is the number and subsequent cost of those discharged prior to *DADT*. Nor does it reflect the number of those who successfully completed their terms of service without incident, a number which, if sources within *SLDN* are correct, should continue to grow.

While the Pentagon is quick to point out that the number of GLBT discharges have declined steadily since 9/11, the GAO report only lends credibility to what *AVER* and other organizations such as ours have been preaching for a decade: Whatever the number of discharges, whether it's 1 or 100, the number is still far too many. The fact that the discharge numbers have dropped has no bearing on the fact that gays and lesbians are still being discriminated against, their value only recognized when it's vital to our national security.

As an organization of GLBT veterans whose main focus is the repeal of *DADT*, we applaud the courage of those in Congress whose concern led to the GAO report. Thanks to the report, now that the true cost of *DADT* has been revealed in a way that all can understand, we may very well see an end to this costly, discriminatory policy

Representative Martin T. Meehan (D-MA) Introduces the *Military Readiness Enhancement Act of 2005*

Wednesday, March 2nd, 2005, marked a major milestone in *AVER*'s long time battle to end discrimination in the United States Armed Forces—the introduction of the aptly named *Military Readiness Enhancement Act of 2005*; a bill introduced by Rep. Martin T. Meehan, (D-MA) which, if passed, could signify the end of *Don't Ask Don't Tell*.

Surrounding the introduction of the bill—which comes about at the heels of a just released GAO (Government Accountability Office) report revealing higher than \$200 million has been spent to recruit and retrain replacements for those kicked out under *DADT*—were a flurry of activities. An assembly of high-ranking veterans of the various Armed Forces converged on Washington the Wednesday following the introduction to show their support for the *Military Readiness Enhancement Act*.

Included among those who have come out nationally in support of this bill will be such notable high-ranking veteran officers as Brigadier General Virgil A. Richard, USA, (Ret)., Rear Admiral Alan M. Steinman, USPHS/USCG (Ret)., and Lieutenant General Claudia Kennedy, USA (Ret)., one of the highest ranking members to ever come out in support of abolishing *DADT*, a policy which has cost us hundreds of millions in taxpayer money. Not to mention the unnecessary loss of highly trained, highly motivated patriotic Americans who wish nothing more than to serve their country.

Simply put, *Don't Ask Don't Tell* doesn't work. GLBT servicemembers have a right to serve openly and honestly, as the proud, patriotic Americans they are. The true tragedy remains the fact that qualified—and sometimes overqualified—men and women are still being fired, in whatever number, simply for whom they love. With no regard given to performance or at what cost was spent to train that particular individual. The military, for reasons of sexual orientation alone, is firing thousands of vital people such as doctors, intelligence experts, and foreign language specialists. Critical personnel at a critical time in our nation's history—at a time when terrorism has become an ugly cloud we've been forced to live under, something that is unlikely to change, regardless of when or if the war in Iraq ever ends.

Now is the time to end this gross injustice. Now is the time to act. We urge you, on behalf of the estimated 65,000 GLBT personnel currently serving in our Armed Forces, to come out in support of this Bill.

The *Forward Observer*
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for
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OTHER NEWS



Los Angeles, California - Series 3

This panoramic photograph of Los Angeles, California was taken by James Bidlorey. Located in the far right with its prominent-shaped roof is the Los Angeles City Hall building. In the distance left, located in the hills of Griffith Park is the Griffith Observatory. In the sky over Los Angeles is one of the famous Goodpastor clouds.

OPERATION: LIFT THE BAN IV AVER 2005 CONVENTION, LOS ANGELES

A Convention to Remember

A critical component of AVER's campaign to *Lift The Ban* is the annual National Convention.

This year's convention hosted by VETERANS CARE, the Los Angeles Chapter of AVER, will take place in West Hollywood. Now's the time to plan to attend and to enjoy the sights in one of the gayest cities in the nation.

Members of VETERANS C.A.R.E. are building an exciting 4-day event from June 30 to July 3. In anticipation of hot weather, a cool round of meetings, discussions, parties, book signings, awards banquet memorial ceremonies, film showings and a night at the Hollywood Bowl have been planned. All geared toward helping gain support and draw attention to our campaign: Operation Lift the Ban.

The 2005 AVER National Convention is being planned in honor of the sacrifices and honorable service given to this nation by its GLBT servicemembers since the Revolutionary War.

A tentative overview of the events being planned is as follows:

Thurs. 6/30 An evening *Meet the Authors'* book expo will put you

in touch with the authors who are writing the books and plays about our experiences.

Fri. 7/1- Friday morning kicks off with a presentation by the *Library of Congress/Veterans History Project*. We will be encouraging all veterans to video record their histories.

After lunch, there will be a most important afternoon discussion on the progress of our campaign to *Lift the Ban* with some of the leading experts from across the nation, and a discussion of transgender issues.

In a suite in the hotel, a video setup will be in place to record your stories for the Library of Congress/Veterans History Project. This will go on for three days.

Friday evening ends with a *Welcoming Party* where you'll enjoy the company of GLBT Veterans from around the country. Refreshments will be provided by the city of West Hollywood.

Sat. 7/2- Saturday morning begins a day of business meetings covering everything from AVER's strategic five year plan to training workshops, with lunch breaks and committee meetings interspersed to help break up the monotony of the business meetings.

The evening's Military Ball/Awards Banquet will be a formal dress affair—a sit-down dinner and show. We welcome all AVER chapters to bring their honorees and present your chosen awards to them.

Sun. 7/3- Sunday's AVER national business promises to be a little more

exciting with the election of the national officers for the next two year period. Included in the day's business meetings will be wrapping up any unfinished business from the meetings on Saturday.

Later that afternoon will be the kickoff of the AVER Fundraising Party at the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Service Center Village. This new facility, built after a seven million dollar fundraising goal was reached, is the smartest such center in the country.

The Renburg Theater is scheduled to play host for our feature film: *'Sis, the Perry Watkins Story.'* In between showings we'll party in the landscaped garden court, enjoy a buffet set up in the art gallery and memorialize Perry Watkins for his success at winning his right to reenter the Army in 1992. We've included some famous local talent in honor of Perry's notoriety for his drag performances in both the United States and Germany.

Then by 7:30, we'll be making our way to the world-famous, *Hollywood Bowl* for its 4th of July Extravaganza, featuring music celebrating Disneyland's 50th Anniversary, accompanied by a splendid fireworks display.

Mon. 7/4- The City of West Hollywood will help us Conduct a Memorial at the W.H. Veterans Memorial. It will give us a chance to reflect on the sacrifices made by our brothers and sisters who have gone on before us. A white dove release will symbolize their departed spirits.

Hotel

Conventioners are invited to stay on the Boulevard at the host hotel for the event: the *Ramada Plaza*

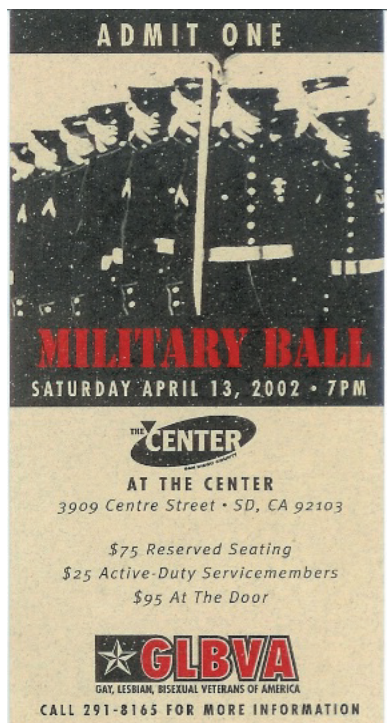
Suites, located at 8585 Santa Monica Boulevard in West Hollywood. There are both rooms and suites to choose from. The many amenities provided include a wonderful swimming pool.

Reservations can be made at a reduced rate between the dates 6/30 to 7/5, by calling 1.800. 228.3344. Request the *West Hollywood Ramada* # 320, and mention confirmation # 71126208 when making your reservations. Reservations cannot be made online.

Meetings spaces for the meetings on Saturday and Sunday have been secured at the *Wyndham Bel Age*, just down the street from the Ramada. The Bel Age will also play host to our Ball and Awards Banquet Saturday evening.

More information and the Convention Registration form will be sent out shortly. Information packets on West Hollywood will follow once you've registered.

**Ticket from the 2002 AVER
Convention held in San Diego**
(BELOW)



Election of National Officers

Convention time also means it is once again time to hold elections for National Officers. Elections for National President, Vice-President, Treasurer, and Secretary, are scheduled to take place on Sunday, July 3rd, during the day's business portion of the convention. Qualified individuals interested in running for the above positions are encouraged to submit nominations at the earliest possible convenience, in writing or via email, to:

Ken Sholes

AVER Nomination Committee Chair

1365 Western Ave. #8

St. Paul, MN 55117

Or submit nomination electronically via ksholes@krollontrack.com. Please make sure to include a brief biography and picture with either the written or electronic submission. Deadline for submitting nominations is

15 June, 2005

Nominations must be in no later than 15 June, 2005. As in the past, nominations are closed once the deadline is passed.

Interested individuals are encouraged to contact Ken Sholes for eligibility requirements.

A Glimpse of Conventions Past

(TOP)

Operation: Lift The Ban 1 Conventioneers gather for a cruise of San Diego Bay, 2002

(BOTTOM)

Uniformed Members pose for a group photo at the Military Ball during **Operation: Lift the Ban II** in San Antonio in 2003





NYC conducts hearing on whether or not to adopt resolution against *DADT*

After more than 10 months of political activism, the NY chapter of *AVER* had the New York City Council consider a resolution (438A) calling on Congress to repeal the *Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue* policy which essentially bans homosexuals from serving in America's armed forces. The City Council's Committee on State and Federal Legislation heard testimony from nine advocates for the resolution urging the repeal of the ban on gays in the military.

Congressman Jerry Nadler of New York spoke about the current Congressional Bill (HR 1059), of which he is a co-sponsor, to repeal the ban on homosexuals in the military; he stated that the law establishing the ban has been a "colossal mistake."

AVER-NY President Denny Meyer testified that, "Our national policy of promoting homophobia within our armed forces has created an atmosphere of fear and distrust that is destructive to unit cohesion; the time has come for the pointless policy of ideological discrimination embodied in the *Don't Ask, Don't Tell* policy to come to an end so that all American patriotic volunteers may serve our nation in pride." As the son of Holocaust refugees who fled Nazi Germany, Denny volunteered to join America's armed forces in 1968, despite being gay, because he had been reared to believe deeply in defending American freedom. More than a decade later, as a Sergeant First Class, he left the service, "so that I could live freely as a gay American. In addition to the 10,000 discharged under the policy, thousands such as myself

left without a word; the loss of training, skills, and leadership is incalculable," said Meyer.

Jason Cianciotto, Research Director of the *National Gay and Lesbian Task Force* (the Task Force) Policy Institute, testified about the disparity of experiences in the military between lesbian women of color and other women who are veterans. For example, according to the 2000 U.S. Census, black women in same-sex households report veteran status at 11 times the rate of all other women nationwide (11% vs. 1% respectively). This is particularly significant given that, according to *SLDN*, black women are discharged at a much higher rate than the proportion at which they serve. Even though black women make up approximately 1% of servicemembers, they comprise over 3% of discharges under *Don't, Ask Don't Tell*. Clearly lesbian women of color are disproportionately impacted by this discriminatory policy.

Dr. Franklin Kameny, a WWII veteran, and pioneer who founded the Gay Rights movement in America, stated that those who prevent patriotic Americans from serving in the armed forces are guilty of treason by virtue of aiding our enemies. In his grandly cantankerous curmudgeon style, he offered to "buy the rope and hang them" himself.

AVER-NY members, Majors Leslie Deutsch (ret. JAG officer) and Jeff McGowan (author of *Major Conflict*) spoke of their experiences as Army officers in combat zones dealing with hiding their own gay identities and the effect of *DADT* on morale and military retention. Major McGowan's spouse Mr. Van Rostenberg also testified.

AVER-NY's Legislative Liaison, James Reilly (also with Stonewall Democrats) spoke of his lengthy battle to upgrade his own discharge, due to homosexuality, to honorable.

Chris Neff, *SLDN's* (Servicemembers Legal Defense Network) Senior Policy Advocate who

has worked on drafting legislation to repeal the ban, testified that "The facts are clear; the military's gay ban hurts military readiness and is a detriment to our national security. The New York metropolitan area is home to approximately 20,000 of our nation's one million lesbian and gay veterans. Each of these men and women, and the more than 65,000 gay service personnel now on duty, are proud, patriotic Americans. Resolution 438 is a landmark step in the battle against the military's ban."

City Council resolution 438A-2004 was introduced by Council Member Alan Gerson and cosponsored by Council Members Boyland, Brewer, Jackson, Lopez, Moskowitz, Nelson, Palma, Perkins, Quinn, Reed, Sears, and Weprin. During the hearing and the press conference that followed, Alan Gerson and Margarita Lopez spoke forcefully in favor of the right of homosexuals to volunteer and serve openly in our armed forces. After a second hearing, yet to be scheduled at this writing, the Committee is expected to pass the resolution to the full City Council where it is expected to receive a favorable majority vote.

In addition to speaking at the press conference for local and national media, which followed the hearing, Denny Meyer (Pres. *AVER-NY*) spoke the following week at Congressman Israel's (D, Long Island, NY) press conference regarding HR 1059, the Congressional Bill of which the Congressman is a co-sponsor.

American Veterans for Equal Rights (*AVER*) is a nationally recognized gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender Veteran Service Organization with chapters throughout the United States. *AVER* advocates ending the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, in addition to existing as a service organization for American GLBT veterans. Denny Meyer is founder of the New York Chapter of the *American Veterans for Equal Rights*, and the organization's national VP for Veterans Affairs. Please visit us at www.aver.us for more info.



National News and Officer Reports



President's Report

Things are progressing remarkably well on several fronts, thanks to the diligence and efforts of many individuals. Individuals you'll be hearing from later in this newsletter.

Thanks to the efforts of VP of Chapter Development David Guy-Gainer and Membership Chair Jim Donovan, we've begun an aggressive campaign geared toward retention and retainment. New chapters continue to sprout up across the country, with interest continuing to grow in other areas as well.

Under Michael Kilmer's guidance, members of the board and chapter presidents have begun working together to create a concrete 5-year strategic plan for our organization, the results of which should be ready by convention. Thanks to our efforts, and the efforts of other organizations fighting for our cause, it seems our message has finally begun to register. The recent *GAO* report mentioned in this newsletter, and the upcoming Blue Ribbon Commission report due later this year, reveal just how wasteful, in dollars and cents, *DADT* has been, something our opponents — particularly in the "red states" — seem to understand. And, while this is good, it's still not enough. What isn't mentioned is the loss of personnel — E-5s and above — who, because of *DADT*, chose not to re-enlist, thereby depriving the services — again — of vital, highly trained personnel. It is up to us to make sure we continue to carry our message.

The result of all this effort and pressure has resulted in the introduction of House Bill 1059: *The Military Enhancement Act of 2005*; a Bill, which, with luck, will mean the end of *DADT*.

We've begun an aggressive press campaign to help push the effort

along, soon to be followed by a print ad campaign. Through the efforts of *MEI*, led by Jim Maloney, we've begun to look into means of reaching out to other VSOs in the hopes of perhaps recruiting more support from that sector.

On the housekeeping side of things, the board is working on a variety of projects such as reworking the constitution and bylaws, regional expansion, and looking into ways of expanding ourselves as a true VSO by providing services to our active duty and veteran GLBT servicemembers.

Thanks to Lara Ballard for creating the sponsorship letter, which was recently mailed out, to help boost our national fundraising efforts. If you aren't in a position to contribute at the present time, make sure to pass it along to someone who might. As the adage goes, every little bit helps.

Membership Chair

Greetings to all!

This has been a good period for our organization. Membership is up somewhat, as is the number of new chapters, viz., New Jersey, NE Ohio. Rochester NY and Ft. Lauderdale are almost ready, and we have had requests from Phoenix AZ and Winston Salem NC.

Just a friendly reminder for a few items:

Moving? Don't forget to send in your change of address. New phone number or email address? Remember to send that too!

It would be preferable for all memberships to be renewed through your chapter, but there is no problem with sending your renewals directly to National. Chapter leaders: please don't "sit" on new memberships or renewals for more than a few days. The member wonders where his membership card or the *Forward Observer* is. And it makes

things more confused in this office. Send *all* membership applications, updates, renewals and checks to *AVER* Membership, POB 97, Plainville IL 62365-0097.

This summer I will be sending out reminder notices to all members whose membership expires in September '05. Please try to have them in to your chapter (or National) by 30 September.

Finally, remember to mention *AVER* in your will! Have a great Summer filled with PRIDE!

Chief Jim Donovan
PO Box 97
Plainville, IL 62365-0097
217.656.3577
jimdave@adams.net

Treasurer

INCOME

Convention	\$ 7,567
Donations	\$ 229
Dues	\$10,930
Interest	\$29

TOTAL INCOME \$ 18,758

EXPENSES

Bad Debt	\$ 75
Bank Charges	\$112
Chapters	\$560
Convention	\$6,053
Gifts	\$75
Office	\$2,280
(Includes all teleconferences & Internet)	
Presidents Discret.	\$180
Public Affairs	\$140
Publications	\$9,523
Tax	\$15
Travel	\$2,042

DIFFERENCE OF INCOME vs EXPENSES OVER PERIOD (-2,296)
Bank Balance as of 31 March 2005 is approx \$ 9,900

Hank Thomas, National Treasurer



National Reports (continued)



Region One VP

Region 1 has had a very active past quarter. Special commendation belongs to *BRAVER*, in Columbus Ohio, which has been a powerhouse of advocacy, events, and fundraising (please see *BRAVER's* Chapter Quarterly Report). Special commendation also goes to the newly formed *NJ AVER* for launching itself with a fantastic and successful Military Ball fundraiser event. (see report on *NJ AVER's* event). Marie Bohusch has been working ceaselessly on developing membership, meetings, and support in three cities in NE Ohio. We are eagerly watching the development of this new concept of launching chapter meetings in different localities.

The Region 1 yearly conference in mid-February, was held in Rochester on the far northern NY State shores of Lake Ontario. Despite fears of being snowed-in by a mid-winter blizzard, everything went beautifully. Two new *AVER* chapters were chartered during the conference. We are pleased to welcome *NJ AVER*, founded by Amanda Farrell, and *NEO AVER*, in northeastern Ohio, founded by Marie Bohusch.

The conference was primarily a training and resource-sharing session aimed at assisting chapters in formation. Topics included: Chapter Development, Social Services, Fundraising within the Leather Community, Political Action, Transgender Inclusion, and Creating Chapter Websites. We were honored by the presence and participation of *AVER* President A.J. Rogue, VP for Chapter Development Dave Guy-Gainor and his partner Dave, and Tony Smith; founder of *MCSN* and DC chapter president. Special thanks go to Tim Stallman and his partner Jerry Mason for hosting the conference, sharing his lovely home with most of the participants, providing and cooking

a fabulous Italian dinner on Friday evening, and organizing everything including our meeting at *The Gay Alliance of the Genessee Valley Center*.

Two more chapters are in formation in Region 1: *RAVER* in Rochester, being formed by Tim Stallman; and *Hudson Valley AVER*, north of New York City, which will be formed by Jeff McGowan, author of *Major Conflict*.

Plans are in formation for launching a Regional web-based newsletter.

Denny Meyer
Region One VP

Region Two VP

Lara Ballard, *AVER's* Region 2 Vice President, spent April Fool's Day in New Orleans as a featured speaker at the *Log Cabin Republicans* annual National Convention. Lara appeared on a panel moderated by Chris Barron, *Log Cabin's* Political Director, along with Sharra Greer, *SLDN's* Legal and Policy Director; and Marty Meekins, the attorney representing *LCR* in its lawsuit seeking to overturn *Don't Ask, Don't Tell*.

The main focus of the discussion was how to frame the debate over *Don't Ask, Don't Tell* in a way that would appeal to predominantly conservative (i.e., Republican) audiences.

Sharra Greer first provided a succinct overview of *DADT*, since it was unclear how familiar the audience was with the law (although a later show of hands revealed dozens of veterans in the audience).

Marty Meekins then discussed the *Log Cabin* lawsuit, explaining that *LCR* was using a similar approach and philosophy to that it used in its Amicus brief in the *Lawrence v.*

Texas case—a straight-up assault on the constitutionality of the policy. The recent *GAO* report, showing that the discharge of 10,000 GLBT servicemembers under *DADT* has cost the taxpayers at least \$200 million, was also discussed.

Lara Ballard then drew to the audience's attention the *Urban Institute* report, showing that there are over one million gay and lesbian veterans in the United States. Comparing that figure to the number of gay discharges, she said, the inescapable conclusion is that the overwhelming majority of GLBT servicemembers serve in the military without getting discharged for being gay. So one of our main challenges, particularly when speaking to conservative audiences, is to articulate why the current policy is so harmful, when it appears to be affecting so few people.

One aspect of *DADT* to talk about, she noted, is the effect it is likely having on reenlistments. There are many talented and distinguished GLBT veterans who, while they didn't get discharged under *DADT*, decided not to reenlist or make the military a career solely or in large part because of the policy. Therefore, all GLBT veterans should come forward with their stories, demonstrating that gays and lesbians can serve successfully, while at the same time explaining why the policy is unworkable and wrong. Lara emphasized that GLBT veterans can be a potent force for change, not only with regard to military issues, but on all issues related to GLBT equality, and that they should make a point of being visible and "out" as both GLBT and as veterans.

An interesting discussion followed, which addressed whether we could anticipate a political backlash in Congress in response to success with the court challenges to *DADT*, as well as the need to get more non-commissioned officers speaking out against the current

policy.

The discussion seemed to have been very well received by the audience, and several *Log Cabin* chapter leaders stated afterwards that they would be very interested in including *AVER* and its members in local events, such as commemorative events on *Memorial Day* and *Veterans' Day*. Two representatives from Chicago and New York, in particular, were glad to know that *AVER* has active chapters in their cities and looked forward to being placed in contact with them.

VP of Strategic Planning

To bring clarity to *AVER*, A.J. Rogue, *AVER* National President, commissioned a temporary committee to develop *AVER*'s Strategic Plan. *AVER*'s Strategic Planning Committee has the challenge to develop a 5 year strategic plan to be launched at *AVER*'s 2005 National Convention. This is an aggressive plan that will provide an organizational focus for *AVER* and its next 5 years.

Michael Kilmer, former President of *AVER Puget Sound*, has accepted the appointment of Vice President of Strategic Planning, in addition to acting as the committee chair. *AVER*'s National Board Members, Regional Vice Presidents, Chapter Presidents, Chairs of *AVER*'s committees are all invited to participate in the Strategic Planning Committee. To develop *AVER*'s Strategic Plan, the Strategic Planning Committee will define *AVER*'s Vision, Mission (using the draft from Region 5 as a starting point), Values, Goals, Objectives, Strategies, Performance Measure, and Responsible Party for each goal. The following is a brief summary of what the Committee has developed to date.

To answer the question of what and where *AVER* wants to be in 5 years, the following *Vision* is proposed:

Marketing Version: "National Name Recognition"

Official Version: "*AVER* serves

as a nationally recognized veterans' service organization for veterans and service members of the U.S. Armed Forces regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity."

This vision reflects *AVER*'s aggressive plan for growth.

To provide *AVER* with a guiding star – *AVER*'s reason for existence that answers who we are and what we do, the following *Mission* is proposed:

Marketing Version: "*AVER* honors all service members and veterans."

Official Version: "*AVER* is a GLBT founded veterans' advocacy and service organization dedicated to the equal and fair treatment of all service members and veterans, while honoring the service and sacrifices of all service members and veterans."

This mission reflects how *AVER* honors service members and veterans.

With the new Vision and Mission, the Committee has developed 7 broadly defined, thematic, and desired outcomes as *AVER*'s goals. The 7 goals cover areas such as: Freedom to Serve, Advocacy, Support and Camaraderie, Education, Veteran and Service Member Pride, Chapter and Membership Development, and improved Organizational Capacity.

Stand by for *AVER*'s:

- Objectives that will provide specific results, measurable results, to answer "what" *AVER* plans to achieve,
- Strategies to provide the means by which goals and objectives are achieved to answer "how" *AVER* will achieve its objectives, and
- Performance Measures to provide quantitative outcomes, outputs or efficiencies so *AVER* will know when its objectives are achieved.

For more information, please contact Michael Todd Kilmer at michael@michaeltodd.net or 619.889.6955

VP of Chapter Development

We implemented our first strategy aimed at recalling to service our members who have come and gone over the last six years. Chief Donovan is mailing a very compelling letter from our National President to those who have not renewed in the last two years. We included a mail back section for them to easily renew and, if not, why they won't come back.

We have formed a new Chapter (Tom Dooley) to which at-large members are now assigned. This chapter will provide, particularly to the rural members, direct information and participation in *AVER* activities. The chapter is assigned to the National Vice President. The rollout of our second strategy should have occurred in March but was delayed so as not to interfere with chapter activities resulting from the GAO report and the resultant Meehan Bill.

The second strategy deals with a focus on targeted areas of expansion. We have collected information from all chapters as to the cities that are on their "radar screen". We have collected demographic data concerning the prime metropolitan areas where *AVER* could be best served by a chartered chapter. This consolidated list has been released. Chapter Presidents, Regional Vice Presidents and the VP of Chapter development will be assigned as named "sponsors" for these new chapters and tactical plans will be co-developed. On a very upbeat note, we were pleased to charter two new chapters in Region 1 – Northeast Ohio and New Jersey. (Thanks Denny!)

David Guy-Gainer
VP, Chapter Development
dg_dg@sbcglobal.net
210.336.1928



The David Guy-Gainer's at the Rochester Sweetheart Ball (ABOVE)

VA, Political Activism

Political Advocacy has involved increased contact, in coordination with AVER President A.J. Rogue, with *SLDN*, *NGLTF*, and local groups in NYC regarding the increased attention to the effort to end *DADT*. The recent and ongoing work on the NY City Council Resolution (438A-2004) involved speakers from *SLDN* and *NGLTF* coordinating with us in this effort. Due to the Bill in Congress to repeal *DADT*, the NYC effort became a national media news event involving interviews with the New York Times Washington DC Bureau and national web reports on *365Gay.com*, as well as local coverage. As a result, a U.S. Congressman has asked me to speak at a press conference regarding the Bill in Congress. A separate report on the NY Council Resolution events has been provided.

We are also working with *NGLTF* on a national survey of GLBT veterans, this project is still in early stages.

A coalition of NYC groups is proposing a Gay Veterans Monument in New York Battery Park, near 9/11



(ABOVE) Two new chapters join the *AVER* fold. Chapter President Amanda Farrell of the newly formed *NJ AVER* chapter (LEFT) joins *NEO AVER* Chapter President Marie Bohusch (CENTER) as Region One VP Denny Meyer looks on (RIGHT)

(BELOW, LEFT TO RIGHT) *NJ AVER* Chapter President Amanda Farrell, Region One VP Denny Meyer, National President A.J. Rogue, and *NEO AVER* Chapter President Marie Bohusch at the Rochester Sweetheart Ball, which took place over the Region One conference weekend.



(CONTINUED ON PAGE 11)

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ground-zero; this project is also in early stages.

There are ongoing interviews with domestic and foreign journalism graduate students writing news feature stories about *AVER*'s efforts to urge the end of *DADT*.

Individual Inquires for Assistance from GLBT veterans and Organizing *AVER* referrals and services:

Inquires via phone, e-mail, and regular mail continue to come in at a rate of several per month. They involve legal questions, discharge upgrades, benefits eligibility, PTSD and other psychological counseling and privacy issues, homelessness, and issues for those returning from combat duty currently, among other issues. In the past quarter, we have begun to be able to better serve these inquiries via the newly established *AVER* Veterans Affairs Committee e-group-list and in coordination with *MCSN* (founded by Tony Smith). *MCSN*, in particular, is engaged in establishing regional frameworks for providing services and referrals. *AVER* and *MCSN* are working to strengthen formal training for peer mentors to be able to provide ongoing assistance to gay and lesbian servicemembers undergoing *DADT* investigations. The *AVER* Veterans Affairs Committee and *MCSN* are working to develop training videos and written material on GLBT sensitivity for use in Veterans Centers and VAMCs. Those interested in actively participating with the Committee and or *MCSN* should contact Denny Meyer or Tony Smith.

Denny Meyer
glbtvetsnyc@yahoo.com
718.849.5665

Tony Smith
wishwrmuk@aol.com
703.675.8475



Update on Loomis Case

Just a short note to bring you up to date on my case against Don't Ask, Don't Tell and the Army for my military retirement. All support has been greatly appreciated.

As you may be aware, after a crucial partial win at the Board for Correction of Military Records, we filed in the U.S. Federal Claims Court based on constitutional, procedural and factual errors to have my military retirement reinstated. Late last year the US Attorney moved to dismiss our case.

David Sheldon and Raymond Toney, my attorney's, last month opposed the motion to dismiss and made our own motion for judgement on the record. We made strong arguments that; the Army invaded my privacy without a warrant following the arson of my home; the record demonstrates the original board of inquiry was seriously biased; the Army improperly calculated my retirement eligibility; *Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue* is unconstitutional; and the military's sodomy statute is unconstitutional.

The arguments in each of these issues were extremely enlightening. The U.S. Supreme Court's recent decision in *Lawrence v. Texas* that sodomy statutes unconstitutionally violate the rights of gay, lesbian and bisexual citizens has provided significant support for our case and we were the first to file in Federal Court following that case.

Last week *GLAAD*, the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation in New York at their 16th Annual *GLAAD Media Awards* presented their

Outstanding TV Journalism Award to *CBS 60 Minutes* for their interview with me, *They Didn't Ask, He Didn't Tell*.

I believe we are going to win our case, but the judge can decide the case in our favor without ever getting to the constitutionality of *Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue* or of the military sodomy statute.

When is still an unknown.

Steve Loomis

AVER Website

The aver.us website is our "front door" to much of the world, and was in need of a major overhaul for some time. I was first approached by A.J. Rogue and James Apedaile about taking over the website at the 2004 *AVER* National Convention in D.C.

This became a reality in September, and since then I have put in more than 200 hours of overhaul, updates, additions, news searches, and maintenance. The first actual step of the overhaul was to get the national site onto a stronger web host. There were four key details to the decision to move. Under the old host, aver.us had run out of storage space. The current host provides far more storage space and bandwidth on a far more robust hosting package. Four data collocation centers means most of the country has to lose power in order to take down aver.us.

Service response is much quicker. Now, instead of sending an emailing about trouble and hopefully getting resolution within a day or two, we can now call customer service 24/7/365, talk to a live technician, and get resolutions started immediately.

Cost was another factor. When purchased in two-year increments, the new host costs *AVER* \$83.40/year. Upgrades to max-out storage and features with the previous host — still far less than what the new host offers — would have been \$419.40/year.

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The first goal of the design overhaul was to bring the appearance of the website into current web standards, comparable to various other GLBT and Veterans organizations. During this time, I established a national *PayPal* (FDIC) account for our National Treasury account in order to allow membership payments and donations to be accepted electronically. *PayPal* was decided as the best choice as it avoids the monthly maintenance and statement fees associated with a merchant based credit card payment gateway, and per-transaction fees are much lower than other no-monthly-fee services such as *Click'n'Pledge*. This helped lower overhead again.

The second phase was to build fully operational webforms, such as the contact form concerning the website, news, and *Forward Observer*, as well as the *AVER* membership application and basic *PayPal* donation page. The third phase was programming issues such as getting the *AVERBB* bulletin board operational, including an interactive calendar and chat room. Because not all of our veteran members are completely out, and some of our members are still in service, a great deal of work was put into securing every aspect of the *AVERBB* so that it is only accessible to members, particularly the member list. Registration is by approval only, and all registration requests are verified either through available officer lists or through the *AVER* Membership Chair - Chief Donovan.

Since that completion, many hours have been devoted to scouring the web for the latest news stories to post in the right side news column on every page, as well as rotating older news items to the News & Press page. I have devoted some time to getting some of the more important older pages, such as the Palm Springs Veterans Memorial page converted into the new web format for consistency. I have also fielded and completed many informational corrections for the chapters and officers.

The *Forward Observer* is

now archived on the News & Press page, which A.J. Rogue, in his guise as newsletter editor, supplies in .pdf format ready for upload. I spend a bit of time with each update making sure that both a print version and a compressed "web read" version are available for download, so that Internet users with low speed connections can still download the *FO* in a timely manner. Our goal is to one day archive all prior issues of the *FO* in .pdf format, replacing past news stories with the full version of old issues.

Lara Ballard has been extremely helpful with fielding links to various news articles, which I then follow up by tracking mainstream versions when possible, as well as non-moving versions because links often change when news sites move an article from fresh news into their archives.

Keeping the news items available often involves a few hours each month of checking the site, and particularly the news items for any broken links, then tracking down different versions of articles if a news source has moved an item from free pages into a paid archive or a subscriber only area.

In the latest update to the site, I posted the addition of the *National Veterans Coming Out Day* information page and link banners for folks to post on other sites, as well as the Sponsorship page.

At the 2005 National Convention in Los Angeles, I will be leading the first ever *AVER* IT & Web Development subcommittee meeting. This subcommittee has been formed with the initial goals to bring all *AVER* chapters up to a standard that puts our self-presentation more on par with other similar organizations, to raise "brand recognition" among the various websites while maintaining a certain degree of variance to avoid confusion between sites, to ensure that we are exploiting all possible fund raising avenues, and to address any technological issues that may arise in the course of keeping our various websites

current, dynamic, and accessible to all, regardless of any disability. If the webmaster of any chapter is not able to attend the conference, I encourage chapters to delegate someone who will be in attendance to bring questions and ensure that answers get back home to the individuals who need them.

Marie Ann Bohusch
Webmaster *AVER*
www.aver.us
fax.216.674.2336



The San Antonio chapter is alive and very active. Our focus has been on advertising our existence and bonding with other GLBT organizations.

Ron Clarke, our Sec/Treas and Public Information Officer has been quite successful in getting information about *AVER* published in community news. He briefed the San Antonio Prime Timers organization and is now the Chair of the San Antonio Pridefest/Parade committee.

Dave Guy-Gainer has met with local members of *HRC*, the *San Antonio Diversity Center*, the *Lesbian and Gay Rights League*, and the *Austin Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce*. Robert Weeks represents us on the *City of San Antonio Veterans Affairs Commission* and has provided a briefing to them about *AVER*.

Dave also shared the Austin airwaves with BG (ret) Virgil Richard and COL (Ret) Paul Dunn providing the public with an update on the fight against *Don't Ask Don't Tell*. He is also scheduled to be the keynote speaker at the Trinity University Gay and Lesbian Student Association. This organization includes students from all local Universities. As you can tell, the chapter has been quite busy but found

The Crow's Nest

*Dedicated to the following individuals who have contributed generously to help
AVER achieve its goals*

Name of Individual or Organization

Sponsorship Level

Demetrio Munoz, New York

\$75.00

Grunt



"Yesterday, we carried the AVER banner in the March on the Capitol. About 6 blocks worth of marchers from all elements of the GLBT community and from across the entire State were in the march. (That's a huge turn out in Austin) I printed some simple business cards to hand out to the crowd. As a result we were "tracked down" by veterans wanting to join our battle. Standing on the steps of the Capitol, I listened to the speeches. During one particularly boring speech, the speaker listed the demands of the community and was met with relatively polite applause. Until she mentioned the repealing of Don't Ask Don't Tell and the crowd roared with yells and applause. I felt a wave of 'we have turned the corner.'"

*—David Guy-Gainer
AVER San Antonio Chapter President
Vice President for Chapter Development*

an interesting way to take a break. We now meet twice a month – one business meeting and one social event (where no business can be discussed). The Chapter's focus will turn next toward Pride planning and participation.

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VETERANS C.A.R.E. LOS ANGELES

Members of *VETERANS C.A.R.E.* have been planning the 2005 *AVER* National Convention, and are generating excitement for its arrival. (Complete convention information on page 4)

It is appropriate to credit some members for the extra work they are doing; Darryl West, James Pinkston, Elizabeth Shaddix, Dan Castillo, Zsa Zsa Gershick, and our newest member, Cheryl Ruff, U.S. Army (Ret) are helping beyond the call of duty.

In addition, we wish to thank Jim Maloney, Exec. Director, *Military-Education Initiative*, and Randy Schecher, Region 5 V.P. for all the help they are contributing. And we must not forget that Lara Ballard, Region 2 V.P. and Marie Bohusch, *NEO AVER* founder, have added their knowledge and expertise at event planning and Net-building respectively.

While there's been little time

for other activities, we did manage to staff a booth at the *Spring Festival* in Palm Springs the weekend of the *White Party*, March 26 & 27.

With all the folks in town for the *White Party* and *Dinah Shore Golf Weekend*, we had a chance to meet and talk with veterans from across the country. There's reason to believe that some of them will be at the convention.

VETERANS C.A.R.E. meets the 2nd Saturday of each month at various locations. Call (909) 871-7178 for time and place.

Ed Westrick
Commander, *VETERANS C.A.R.E.*
909.875.7178
honorinnglbtvets@yahoo.com

Never before has it been so vital for GLBT Veterans to take a stance and "Come Out." With the introduction of Rep. Meehan's (D-MA) Military Readiness Enhancement Act into the House (109thC HR 1059), America stands a chance to end sexuality based discrimination in the United States Uniformed Services. Equally vital is the task of raising GLBT awareness within the VA system. Many of our VA clinicians have little-to-no training concerning GLBT issues. For the sake of those who serve now, as well as those who have served in the past, now is the time that we must stand united. The time to "Come Out" is now. You say that your boss and your bartender already know you are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, but do they know that you are also a U.S. Uniformed Service Veteran? Please join us for National Veterans Coming Out Day! (NVCOD)

SACRAMENTO VALLEY VETERANS

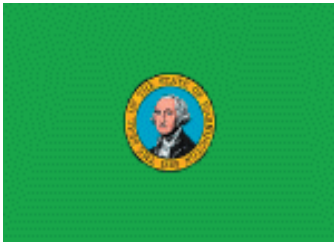
We are proud to report the addition of 2 new members in February. In March we had 3 more show up to the meeting with one submitting a membership. On March 20th we held our annual "Canteen Show" fund raiser starring the Fabulous "Miss Richfield 1981" and to no surprise was another success. I would like to thank all our members for making another successful fund raiser. With the money we raised we will be able to run our booths for pride and hold our annual *GLBT Veterans Memorial* in August. This year we will be teaming up with the *Puget Sound Chapter* to host a booth at the Portland Oregon pride event on June 19th, and are looking forward to working with Seattle in hopes of starting other chapters around the area.

On a related subject, Sacramento would also like to congratulate the New Jersey chapter on getting their group up and running, and holding what appears to be a successful fund raiser. We look forward to meeting them at the National Convention.

Semper Fi

Raymond Allen
Chapter President,
Sacramento Valley Veterans
916. 369.8711
916. 203.1167
www.sacvalleyveterans.com





Puget Sound Chapter

The *Puget Sound Chapter* is working quietly with some folks in Spokane to put together a new chapter. So far we have about 4-5 potential members, one of which who wants to start a chapter in the Portland OR area within the next year. Also coming up for Puget Sound is a combined effort with the Sacramento chapter to represent *AVER* at Portland Pride June 18th and 19th. The following weekend is the Seattle Pride Festival. We will be sharing a booth with *SLDN* again this year. In a surprise phone call from a Pride Committee member, we were told that *AVER* had been awarded a free booth because of the work we do.

We have also recently learned that A.J. Rogue, our National President, is planning to attend the event.

Judi "Julz" Carey
President, *AVER Puget Sound*
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Seattle, WA 98109
425.255.4916
seasii@aol.com



(ABOVE) Newly elected board members from left to right; Mark La Fountain, Treasurer, President Mary O'Connor, Vice President Carl Trough

Florida Gold Coast Chapter

AVER is pleased to announce the long-anticipated development of the Ft. Lauderdale area *Florida Gold Coast Chapter* of the *American Veterans for Equal Rights*. Above and below are member pictures of the recently formed chapter.

(BELOW) Mark La Fountaine, Dick Rogers, Dil Hatchett, Mary O'Connor, Bill Mullins, Dan Murphy and Carl Trough





The long, cold Chicago winter has given members of the *Chicago Chapter* time to recharge their batteries, and also time to visit some of the local politicians. We feel that it is extremely important, at this time, to continuously maintain high visibility for glbt veterans.

In December, a good number of veterans turned out for the Mayor's Veterans Reception and were photographed, and well-received by Chicago Mayor Daley. He has always been very supportive of us, and assists us every year during Pride Month with a Proclamation and a Salute to GLBTveterans.

In January, newly-elected freshman Senator Barak Obama held a Veterans Forum. Hundreds of veterans turned out for this event. Sen. Obama is a rising star in the Democratic party. We have been sending him our newsletter for many years, so he knows who we are. Now that he is a member of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, we hope that he will do the right thing for America's veterans. We do know that three days after the Veterans Forum, he met with Mr. Jim Nicholson, the new head of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and expressed his displeasure with the treatment that Illinois veterans were receiving.

In February, at the *Salute to African-American Veterans*, we had the opportunity to speak with Secretary of State Jesse White, who is a veteran of the Korean War. Sec. of State Jesse White is one of the most respected and well-liked politicians in Illinois. He has always received an amazing reception in the gay community.

In March, members of the *Chicago Chapter* were invited to a Veterans Reception at the opening of the new Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield, IL. The following day, Rochelle Crump, the Asst. Director of Veterans Affairs for the State of Illinois invited us to tour the State of Illinois Veterans Headquarters. We were very impressed with the facilities.

Our local newsletter, *VetPride*, is mailed out, not only to all officers of *AVER*, but also many elected officials across this country - to name a few, President Bush, Vice-president Cheney, Sec of State Condoleezza Rice, Sec. of Defense Rumsfeld, etc. We know that many of them probably never see it. We also know that some do see it. When Sen Al Gore was running for Vice President, we met his wife Tipper Gore. When we told her we were gay veterans, she said "I get your newsletter." So, who knows.

We are looking forward to the many veterans events at this time of the year. We are preparing for the Memorial Day Parade in Chicago, which is the largest in the country. Of the more than 200 contingents in the parade, we will be the only GLBT unit. Last year we were joined by the *Lakeside Freedom Marching Band*, but this year they have decided to regroup. It's lonely being the only one, but we are pleased to be asked, and we feel that it is important for us to be there.

And of course we are preparing for our *12th annual Remembrance Ceremony* at Allen Schindler's grave in Steger, IL. Pride Parade and Pride month activities will be reported on in the next issue.

The Chicago Chapter meets on the first Thursday of every month at 7:00 p.m. at Ann Sathers Restaurant in Belmont.

Jim Darby
President, *Chicago Chapter, AVER*.
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jamesdarby@aol.com
(773) 752 0058



After many months of personal setbacks and other work for *AVER* -- *NEO AVER* finally charged out of the gate, getting in 2 meet&greet this year before the February 2005 Region 1 Conference, bringing their total members up to 6.

The first goal was to ensure that meetings were reasonably accessible to all veterans and allies who would like to attend. Because *NEO AVER* serves such a huge metro-plex area (Cleveland, Akron/Canton, Warren/Youngstown, a total of 7 counties in our quadrant), it was decided from the start that meetings must rotate around the region. Monthly meetings rotate between the *Cleveland LGBT Community Center*, the Akron Pride Center, and *The Alley* - a very veteran-friendly LGBT bar in Warren, OH, just northwest of Youngstown.

We decided this was best, as within each metro area, many people rely on friends to drive or public transit, and so crossing the 40 or so miles between the three metro areas can get expensive for some folks. Marie has also contacted the *Sandusky/Firelands Pride Organization* in an effort to drum up activity in the central "North Shore" area.

Marie developed a postcard size handbill to distribute on info racks at VA CBOC's, bookstores, coffee shops and bars, with a large *NEO AVER* logo and meeting info on the front, and the "fine print" about *AVER* as a whole, plus website URL, email and PO Box addresses on the back. An example of that handbill is on the *AVERBB* at <http://aver.us/averbb>. Marie regularly reissues these with updated info for the next two or three upcoming meetings. While promoting the pre-conference events, Marie was also able to make contact with some HIV/AIDS



(ABOVE) **Chicago Chapter President Jim Darby with Sec. of State Jesse White, and Travis**
 (BELOW) **Randy Williamson, Sen. Barak Obama, and Chapter President Jim Darby**



outreach workers who often work with veterans, and made sure that they had the *NEO AVER* contact info as well as her personal contact info in case any veterans are interested or looking for help.

At the February Region 1 Conference, *NEO AVER* received its charter together with *NJ AVER*. While brainstorming for Regional awareness/ action ideas, Marie asked if anyone had ever attempted to organize a *National Veterans Coming Out Day*, and in proper military fashion, was instantly dubbed volunteer spearhead/ chair for the whole project. She graciously accepted the task and will be leading the *NVCOD* subcommittee meeting at the 2005 *AVER* National Convention in Los Angeles.

Marie Bohusch
 Chapter President, *NEO AVER*
 330.923.4145
mab@h-103.com

**editor's note. More info on NVCOD can be found on page 14. Visit page 10 for a picture of Marie's chartering ceremony.*



Although nervous at first as far as tickets sales were concerned in the beginning of the week, we were completely astonished that over 100 people attended the event. An unbelievable amount of just over \$2400 was raised as an effort of the Military Ball, our first fundraising effort ever attended. The proceeds will go far in helping *NJ AVER* establish itself.

Among the keynote speakers was our very own Denny Meyer (NY *AVER*/ Region I Vice President). Joining him was local community leader Dave D'amico (Commissioner, Head Detective of the Department of Hate Crimes/ NJ Prosecutors Office). Both speakers were unbelievable, each covering separate topics.

Meyer spoke of the history of gays who'd served in the military. While Commissioner D'amico spoke of his experience with "hate crimes" during his career, which lead him to the position he currently serves within our NJ Community.

Since the event we have received several emails from people who attended, raving about the food, the flag ceremony which included the following flags: the American, Canadian, Air Force, Marine Corps, Navy, Army, POW, Vietnam, Gay, Leather, boy, girl, Monmouth County, NJ, Bear, and of course the *NJ Andromeda* Colors. The flag ceremony was lead by a bag piper and the National Anthem was sung acapella.

This moving, patriotic and honor-filled event will surely live on those who attended. For some, it was a lesson regarding soldiers who are serving now, or have served previously in silence. As well as those who served and received dishonorable discharges for being gay. Several people came up to both Denny and I that night; people I know we touched, and I know in the future we will help. That night, through Tony, I met a wonderful man, with whom I hope to nourish a great friendship.

I thank all of you for your support for the ball and especially thank Denny for making his way down from NY and staying with Amy and I through the long night. I wish you all could have been here. It truly was a night to remember.

Amanda D. Farrell
President, *NJ AVER*
57 S. Main St. #250
Neptune, NJ 07753
info@njaver.com



It has not been a quiet quarter around here. Despite exaggerated rumors of chapter president Denny Meyer's demise, we've been a bit busy. In February we tabled the entire weekend at the giant GLBT Expo at New York's Convention Center where we signed up several new members, met vets from around the U.S. and referred them to their local chapters, and networked with other local GLBT organizations. Overactivity resulted in Chapter President Denny Meyer having to make an unexpected trip to the hospital with bronchitis, however, we are happy to report that he is home and feeling much better, now, and up to his usual antics of creating trouble.

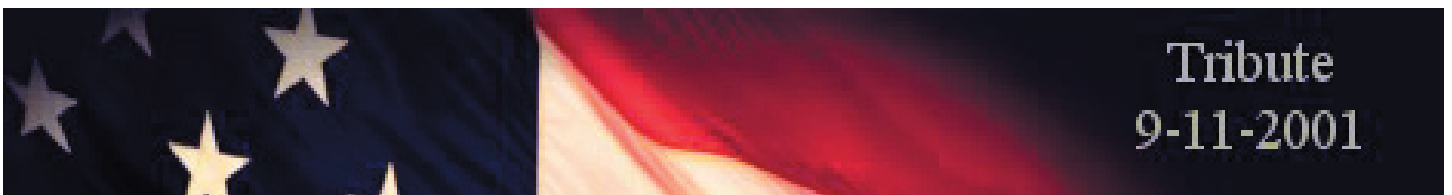
In early March, *AVER* VP Joe Kennedy (author of 'Summer of 77, Last Hurrah of Gay Activist Alliance', available free on www.gaynewsandviews.com) organized *AVERNY*'s march in the alternate all inclusive St. Patrick's Day Parade in Queens.

On March 22nd, *AVERNY* had its day in New York's City Hall with a preliminary City Council Committee hearing on its *DADT* repeal resolution, followed by a press conference. Participants included representatives from *SLDN*, *NGLTF*, gay pioneer and *AVER* member Dr. Franklin Kameny, and two former Army majors (Leslie Deutsch and Jeff McGowan) who are *AVERNY* members. Special recognition goes to those whose efforts made the hearing happen, including NY City Councilmember Alan Gerson who

introduced the resolution and his openly gay Chief of Staff Dirk McCall, *AVERNY*'s Legislative Liaison James Reilly (whom we call our Rottweiler for his ability to corner councilmembers), and openly out councilmembers Lopez, Reed, and Quinn, among others, as well as *AVERNY* members Claude Ashby Jr., Secretary Tony Breton, and VP Joe Kennedy who worked tirelessly towards success. (See full separate report on this event). A second hearing and full City Council vote are yet to come.

Denny Meyer
President, *AVER-NY*
glbtvetsnyc@yahoo.com

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As with any written material, any electronic submissions become the property of *AVER* and are not returnable.



H.R. 1059: The *Military Readiness Enhancement Act of 2005*

109th CONGRESS 1st Session

H. R. 1059

To amend title 10, United States Code, to enhance the readiness of the Armed Forces by replacing the current policy concerning homosexuality in the Armed Forces, referred to as 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell', with a policy of nondiscrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

March 2, 2005

Mr. MEEHAN (for himself, Mr. ABERCROMBIE, Mr. ACKERMAN, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. BECERRA, Mr. BERMAN, Ms. BERKLEY, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, Mr. CAPUANO, Mrs. CAPPES, Mr. CROWLEY, Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, Ms. DEGETTE, Mr. DELAHUNT, Ms. DELAURO, Mr. ENGEL, Mr. FARR, Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts, Ms. HARMAN, Mr. HINCHEY, Ms. NORTON, Mr. HOLT, Mr. HONDA, Mr. ISRAEL, Mr. JACKSON of Illinois, Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, Mr. KUCINICH, Mr. LANGEVIN, Mr. LANTOS, Mr. LEWIS of Georgia, Ms. LEE, Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California, Ms. MCCOLLUM of Minnesota, Mr. MCDERMOTT, Mr. MCGOVERN, Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California, Mr. MORAN of Virginia, Mr. NADLER, Mr. OBERSTAR, Mr. OLVER, Mr. PALLONE, Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD, Ms. LINDA T. SANCHEZ of California, Mr. SANDERS, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Mr. SHAYS, Ms. SOLIS, Mr. STARK, Mrs. TAUSCHER, Mr. UDALL of Colorado, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Ms. WATERS, Ms. WATSON, Mr. WAXMAN, Mr. WEXLER, and Ms. WOOLSEY) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Armed Services

A BILL

To amend title 10, United States Code, to enhance the readiness of the Armed Forces by replacing the current policy concerning homosexuality in the Armed Forces, referred to as 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell', with a policy of nondiscrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the 'Military Readiness Enhancement Act of 2005'.

SEC. 2. PURPOSE.

The purpose of this Act is to institute in the Armed Forces a policy of nondiscrimination based on sexual orientation.

SEC. 3. REPEAL OF 1993 POLICY CONCERNING HOMOSEXUALITY IN THE ARMED FORCES.

The following provisions of law are repealed:

- (1) Section 654 of title 10, United States Code.
- (2) Subsections (b), (c), and (d) of section 571 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1994 (10 U.S.C. 654 note).

SEC. 4. ESTABLISHMENT OF POLICY OF

NONDISCRIMINATION BASED ON SEXUAL ORIENTATION IN THE ARMED FORCES.

(a) Establishment of Policy- (1) Chapter 37 of title 10, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

Sec. 656. Policy of nondiscrimination based on sexual orientation

(a) Policy- The Secretary of Defense, and the Secretary of Homeland Security with respect to the Coast Guard when it is not operating as a service in the Navy, may not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation against any member of the armed forces or against any person seeking to become a member of the armed forces.

(b) Discrimination on Basis of Sexual Orientation- For purposes of this section, discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is--

(1) in the case of a member of the armed forces, the taking of any personnel or administrative action (including any action relating to promotion, demotion, evaluation, selection for an award, selection for a duty assignment, transfer, or separation) in whole or in part on the basis of sexual orientation; and

(2) in the case of a person seeking to become a member of the armed forces, denial of accession into the armed forces in whole or in part on the basis of sexual orientation.

(c) Personnel and Administrative Policies and Action- The Secretary of Defense, and the Secretary of Homeland Security with respect to the Coast Guard when it is not operating as a service in the Navy, may not establish, implement, or apply any personnel or administrative policy, or take any personnel or administrative action (including any policy or action relating to promotions, demotions, evaluations, selections for awards, selections for duty assignments, transfers, or separations) in whole or in part on the basis of sexual orientation.

(d) Rules and Policies Regarding Conduct- Nothing in this section prohibits the Secretary of Defense, and the Secretary of Homeland Security with respect to the Coast Guard when it is not operating as a service in the Navy, from prescribing or enforcing regulations governing the conduct of members of the armed forces if the regulations are designed and applied without regard to sexual orientation.

(e) Re-Accession of Otherwise Qualified Persons Permitted- Any person separated from the armed forces for homosexuality, bisexuality, or homosexual conduct in accordance with laws and regulations in effect before the date of the enactment of this section, if otherwise qualified for re-accession into the armed forces, shall not be prohibited from re-accession into the armed forces on the sole basis of such separation.

(f) Sexual Orientation- In this section, the term 'sexual orientation' means heterosexuality, homosexuality, or bisexuality, whether the orientation is real or perceived, and includes statements and consensual sexual conduct manifesting heterosexuality, homosexuality, or bisexuality.

(2) The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended--

- (A) by striking the item relating to section 654; and
- (B) by adding at the end the following new item: 656. Policy of nondiscrimination based on sexual orientation in the armed forces.

(b) Conforming Amendments- Title 10, United States

Code, is amended as follows:

(1) Section 481 is amended--

(A) In subsection (a)(2), by inserting ', including sexual orientation discrimination,' after 'discrimination' in subparagraphs (C) and (D); and

(B) in subsection (c), by inserting 'and sexual orientation-based' after 'gender-based'.

(2) Section 983(a)(1) is amended by striking '(in accordance with section 654 of this title and other applicable Federal laws)'.

(3) Section 1034(i)(3) is amended by inserting 'sexual orientation,' after 'sex,'.

SEC. 5. BENEFITS.

Nothing in this Act, or the amendments made by this Act, shall be construed to require the furnishing of dependent benefits in violation of section 7 of title 1, United States Code (relating to the definitions of 'marriage' and 'spouse' and referred to as the 'Defense of Marriage Act').

SEC. 6. NO PRIVATE CAUSE OF ACTION FOR DAMAGES.

Nothing in this Act, or the amendments made by this Act, shall be construed to create a private cause of action for damages.

SEC. 7. REGULATIONS.

(a) In General- Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense shall revise Department of Defense regulations, and shall issue such new regulations as may be necessary, to implement section 656 of title 10, United States Code, as added by section 4(a). The Secretary of Defense shall further direct the Secretary of each military department to revise regulations of that military department in accordance with section 656 of title 10, United States Code, as added by section 4(a), not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act. Such revisions shall include the following:

(1) Revision of all equal opportunity and human relations regulations, directives, and instructions to add sexual orientation nondiscrimination to the Department of Defense Equal Opportunity policy and to related human relations training programs.

(2) Revision of Department of Defense and military department personnel regulations to eliminate procedures for involuntary discharges based on sexual orientation.

(3) Revision of Department of Defense and military department regulations governing victims' advocacy programs to include sexual orientation discrimination among the forms of discrimination for which members of the Armed Forces and their families may seek assistance.

(b) Regulation of Conduct- The Secretary of Defense, and the Secretary of Homeland Security with respect to the Coast Guard when it is not operating as a service in the Navy, shall ensure that regulations governing the personal conduct of members of the Armed Forces shall be written and enforced without regard to sexual orientation.

(c) Definition- In this section, the term 'sexual orientation' has the meaning given that term in section 656(f) of title 10, United States Code, as added by section 4(a).

END



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