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**EQCA to Sponsor Bill Giving State Veterans Benefits to LGBT Servicemembers Discharged Under DADT**

(Sacramento) Equality California announced today that it intends to sponsor a bill authored by Assemblymember Dr. Richard Pan (D-Sacramento) that will ensure state veterans benefits are not denied to lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) veterans discharged from the military solely because of their sexual orientation or gender identity and expression. Sacramento Valley Veterans also plan to co-sponsor the bill.

“I look forward to working with Equality California on this bill to ensure that veterans who have been discharged because of their sexual orientation or gender identity and expression will receive state veterans benefits,” said Dr. Pan. “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ was repealed in September because of the growing understanding that not only do our lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender military service members have the right to serve openly, but that our country is safer when they do. Making sure these veterans, who have always been an important part of our armed forces, receive the honor and benefits they deserve is an important step towards equality.”

“As a veteran of the United States Marine Corps, I know that there are lifelong consequences caused by discharges based on sexual orientation and gender identity or gender expression, including limiting the veteran’s access to benefits like the GI Bill or Veterans Administration healthcare.” said Equality California Government Affairs Director Mario Guerrero. “It is important, especially with the repeal of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell,' that our lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender veterans are taken care of and that they receive all the benefits they deserve for serving our country.”

The bill is believed to be the first law of its kind in the nation, not only to provide benefits to lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) veterans, but also to expressly provide benefits to transgender servicemembers discharged from military service solely because of gender identity or gender expression. While the recent repeal of DADT has addressed discrimination faced by LGB servicemembers, it does not address the ongoing discrimination against and discharge of transgender servicemembers.

“The repeal of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' is an important victory for the LGBT-equality movement, but we have much more work to do to right the wrongs inflicted on LGBT servicemembers under DADT,” said Clarissa Filgioun, Equality California Board Chair. “We are incredibly grateful to Assemblymember Pan for his advocacy on behalf of LGBT veterans and are honored to have the opportunity to partner with him to

ensure the bill is approved by the legislature and signed into law by Governor Brown.”

To learn more about Equality California-sponsored legislation, visit [www.eqca.org/legislation](http://www.eqca.org/legislation).

*Equality California (EQCA) is the largest statewide lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) rights advocacy organization in California. Over the past decade, Equality California has strategically moved California from a state with extremely limited legal protections for LGBT individuals to a state with some of the most comprehensive civil rights protections in the nation. Equality California successfully sponsored more than 85 pieces of legislation and continues to advance equality through legislative advocacy, electoral work, public education and community empowerment. [www.eqca.org](http://www.eqca.org)*