

“DON’T ASK, DON’T TELL” ALARMS THE FAITHFUL

Recently we explained to the media why it is necessary for those reviewing the military’s “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy to study the free speech and religious liberty implications of repealing it.

Discussions abounded during the week after Andrews Air Force Base withdrew the invitation to Tony Perkins from speaking at a National Prayer Luncheon. Those conversations left us convinced that much more was at stake than just the Perkins travesty.

At issue are the legitimate concerns of many Catholic and Protestant communities: What will happen to the free speech and religious liberty rights of those who serve in the military, especially the clergy, if “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” is repealed?

We contacted the Senate Armed Services Committee asking for a review of the impact that a repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” might have on these First Amendment rights. We also contacted those in charge of leading the assessment of gays in the military, namely, Jeh Johnson, general counsel for the Department of Defense, and Gen. Carter Ham, commander of the U.S. Army Forces in Europe.

What we need to know is obvious. If Perkins, who is a civilian, was punished for supporting the existing policy, God only knows what will happen to those in uniform if they voice disapproval of a new policy. Until this constitutional issue is resolved, further review of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” should be put on ice.