



## Clinton Discusses His Signing of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell'

By U.S. NewsWire

June 25, 2004

<https://chicago.gopride.com/news/article.cfm/articleid/2016544>

---

WASHINGTON, DC -- In his new autobiography, "My Life," former President Bill Clinton recalls the public and Congressional debate over his promise to lift the military's ban on lesbian, gay and bisexual service members.

President Clinton writes that he met with the Joint Chiefs, all of whom opposed lifting the military's ban. "(T)hey maintained that letting (gays) serve openly would be, in General Powell's words, 'prejudicial to good order and discipline,'" Clinton writes. In a new revelation, however, Clinton also says that the Joint Chiefs, despite their personal opposition, "made it clear that if I ordered them to take action, they'd do the best job they could."

Clinton also recalls meetings with members of the influential Senate Armed Services Committee, many of whom also opposed lifting the ban, including the Committee's Chairman, Senator Sam Nunn (D-GA). Clinton writes that he believed Nunn's arguments, and the arguments of others opposed to allowing open service, "could have been used with equal force against Truman's order on integration."

While Clinton notes that a slim majority of Americans supported his position on lifting the ban, most members of Congress viewed the support as insufficient. "Congress," he writes, "thought it was a dead-bang loser for them."

"With congressional defeat inevitable," Clinton says, "(Defense Secretary) Les Aspin worked with Colin Powell and the Joint Chiefs on a compromise," that became known as "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

Though not stated specifically in *My Life*, Clinton's own opposition on the military's gay ban has only strengthened since leaving office. In a statement made to Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (SLDN) in October 2004, Clinton said that "Simply put, there is no evidence to support a ban on gays in the military." Since 1993, Clinton told SLDN, "Our nation as a whole has moved significantly . . . toward recognizing the full citizenship of gay Americans." He also urged Americans to "keep striving for the time when serving in our military is an honor open to everyone regardless of sexual orientation."

"President Clinton, like the overwhelming majority of Americans, has learned first-hand the detrimental impact the military's gay ban continues to have on our armed forces," said C. Dixon Osburn, Executive Director of SLDN. "Congress should revisit this policy and repeal 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' once and for all."