

1 **OVERTURE 17** from South Texas Presbytery (to MNA, OC)
2 “Direct MNA and PRJCCMP to Approve Petitioning U.S. Government
3 regarding Don’t-Ask-Don’t-Tell Policy in the Military”
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5 South Texas Presbytery requests that the **38th General Assembly of the Presbyterian**
6 **Church in America instruct the Committee on Mission to North America to approve**
7 **the request of the Presbyterian and Reformed Joint Commission on Chaplains and**
8 **Military Personnel (PRJCCMP) to humbly petition with the attached letter**
9 **(Attachment A) The Secretary of Defense, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the**
10 **service Chiefs and the President of the United States in his capacity as Commander in**
11 **Chief, with copies to GEN Carter Ham, Commander, U. S. Army Forces Europe and**
12 **Pentagon General Counsel Jeb Johnson, to maintain the existing policy of "Don't Ask -**
13 **Don't Tell," hereafter “DADT,” and faithfully to resist its removal, for the protection**
14 **and meaningful continuance of the free exercise of religion within the Armed Forces of**
15 **the United States.** Below are the Grounds of the recommendation.
16

17 **Grounds:**

- 18 **1. Whereas,** believing that the Word of God requires ministers, and other church officers, to
19 proclaim the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27), and that it is a grave dereliction of
20 duty to proclaim "Peace, peace" when there is no [actual] peace, or to refuse to
21 confront those who "call evil good, and good evil, who substitute darkness for light,
22 or light for darkness" (Isaiah 5:20); and
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- 24 **2. Whereas,** believing it is the duty of the civil magistrate, "as nursing fathers, to protect the
25 church of our Common Lord . . . in such a manner that all ecclesiastical persons
26 whatever shall enjoy the full, free, and unquestioned liberty of discharging every
27 part of their sacred function, without violence or danger . . . and as Jesus Christ hath
28 appointed a regular government and discipline in His church, no law of any
29 commonwealth should interfere with, let, or hinder, the due exercise thereof;" and
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- 31 **3. Whereas,** believing (in light of over a century of our collective military experience) that
32 any removal, or diminishing of, the well established U.S. military policy, and high
33 moral purpose, of excluding open homosexuals from military service will, most
34 certainly, put all chaplains who believe the Bible to be God's Holy Word in its
35 entirety gravely at risk of unconstitutional pressure, and eventual persecution, for
36 upholding the Scriptural truth that homosexual thinking and behavior is sinful,
37 should be so named, and ought to be corporately resisted; and
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- 39 **4. Whereas,** believing that any governmental decision to permit acceptance and inclusion of
40 homosexuals serving openly in our military services, will most grievously, "interfere
41 in matters of faith," particularly the exercise of Christian ministry on the part of our
42 PRJCCMP-endorsed chaplains; and
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- 44 **5. Whereas,** it is apparent from the action of the 2009 PCA and OPC General Assemblies
45 that a number of teaching and ruling elders do not consider such a situation to

1 constitute a circumstance extraordinary enough to warrant General Assembly action.
2 (This in part may be because of the failure to appreciate the difference between a
3 “free civilian society” and a “hierarchical military society.”) To the contrary the
4 South Texas Presbytery believes that silence by the church on this issue endangers
5 the evangelical chaplaincy in the Armed Services, particularly the continuance of a
6 faithful gospel ministry by almost two hundred PRJCCMP-endorsed pastors
7 (chaplains).
8

9 **6. Whereas**, it is our belief that this is an extraordinary case as demonstrated by the
10 following examples among others. We believe that these are predictable and
11 potential results when/or if DADT is repealed by Congress, based on statements
12 from lobbying groups supporting the removal of this ban, and similar judicial rulings
13 and/or legislative actions already enacted or proposed within our country:
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- 15 a. Unit chaplains may be expected in their preaching, teaching, and counsel to
16 support the federal military policy of non-discrimination and will be subject to
17 equal rights complaints and/or charges if there is any spoken disapproval of
18 homosexual practice and relationships. By way of contrast, while fornication and
19 adultery are both great evils, neither is a politically protected behavior.
- 20 b. Chaplains who frequently hold command-sponsored marriage retreats to
21 strengthen traditional marriages may be required to include homosexual couples
22 to avoid equal rights complaints or charges.
- 23 c. Chaplains may be required to facilitate sensitivity training classes for military
24 personnel to foster acceptance of the homosexual lifestyle within the ranks.
- 25 d. Chaplains may be asked to marry, baptize, administer communion, and provide
26 other spiritual services to practicing homosexuals (who may profess to be
27 Christians) which are reserved by Scripture for repentant and obedient believers.
28 Again equal civil rights discrimination and not the free exercise of religion will
29 be the complaint.
- 30 e. Chaplains may be expected to support excising all anti-homosexual passages
31 from any Bibles permitted in military chapels until a “homosexual friendly
32 bible” is printed, which may become the required version for chapel worship and
33 for distribution to military personnel. Current gifts of Bibles for service member
34 distribution by civilian organizations would be ended as well.
- 35 f. A serious dissonance between scriptural truth and immoral law supporting sinful
36 behavior will be generated within the ranks, jeopardizing unit cohesion so
37 critical in combat. Again, equal rights and the elimination of alleged “hate
38 speech” will trump the vital blessing of good order and discipline as well as
39 religious freedom.
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41 **7. In summation**, on the basis of already observed pressures against PRJCCMP-endorsed
42 chaplains, we believe that the proposed elimination of the DADT policy will become
43 catastrophic in the emerging unbiblical measures which it will bring to bear against
44 all chaplains. Chaplains may be required to refrain from any identification of any
45 aspect of homosexuality as sinful.

1 **8. THEREFORE**, the South Texas Presbytery believes, in light of the above, that it is our
2 biblical duty to recognize the extraordinary danger descending upon the visible
3 church from this "extraordinary case," by humbly and urgently petitioning (with
4 biblical grounds) the involved "civil magistrates" to refrain from repealing the
5 current DADT policy.
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7 (Note: Quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are from Chapters XXIII and XXXI of the
8 *Westminster Confession of Faith*)
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10 *Approved by South Texas Presbytery at its stated meeting, April 24, 2010*

11 *Attested by /s/ TE Jon Anderson, stated clerk, South Texas Presbytery*
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13 (This request, along with grounds, was originally submitted by: Major General Bentley B.
14 Rayburn, USAF (Ret.) Chairman: Presbyterian and Reformed Joint Commission on Chaplains
15 and Military Personnel)

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Attachment A

**PETITION LETTER TO MILITARY/CIVILIAN AUTHORITIES
(Letterhead Stationary)**

DATE:

TO: General or Honorable XXXXX

FROM: The [Name of Denomination]

SUBJECT: Potential Removal of the Military “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (DADT) Policy

1. Concern: The [member denomination] is gravely concerned over the potential removal of the current DADT policy that has essentially in principle, though not specifically named as such, governed the service of homosexual individuals in our military for much of its history. The removal of this current ban may go so far as to force the resignation of our currently serving chaplains from the military as well as the service of military members from this denomination.
2. Consequences: The removal of the ban opens up the very real potential of the following ramifications of repealing DADT:
 - a. Chaplains may be vulnerable to the charge of discrimination or command reprimand if they preach, teach, or counsel in accordance with the passages in the Bible which directly speak of the sin of homosexual practice.
 - b. Bibles in military chapels and on military bases will be under the threat of excision of all passages which speak very directly to the sin of homosexual practice. Whether it will be under the guise of “hate speech” or speech contrary to the policy of the Department of Defense, the effort may be made soon after the removal of the ban.
 - c. Marriage retreats conducted by chaplains intended to strengthen traditional marriage may have to include homosexual couples which may violate chaplains’ faith tenets and negatively impact the voluntary participation of married heterosexual couples.
 - d. Homosexual couples may seek union ceremonies or marriages, which are in violation of the beliefs and ordination vows of a large percentage of military chaplains, not just those from this denomination. Refusal will invite the charge of discrimination and command reprimand.
 - e. The “free exercise” and free speech rights of chaplains and military members may be abrogated, as Equal Opportunity policies, “hate speech” laws, or other legalities trump the First Amendment.
 - f. These potentialities are real examples of or similar to what is already proposed in statements by lobbying groups supporting the repeal.
3. Appeal: For the above and many other reasons affecting chaplains and military members in the ranks we humbly appeal to you to not repeal DADT. We plead this for the good of the nation, for the good of the chaplains who serve the nation on behalf of their church, for the good of the military members from this church who serve in our armed services, and for the protection of the constitutional principle of the free exercise of religion.

Sincerely,

Clerk, [Member Denomination]

Encl: General Assembly Resolution passed on June XX, 2010