

June 28, 2018

The Honorable James N. Mattis
Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense, Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Mr. Secretary,

We write to express our concern that Pentagon leadership is backing away from supporting and celebrating lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) service members and Department of Defense (DoD) employees. Seven years ago, Congress repealed “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (DADT) and extended our country’s promise of equality to those who protect it every day. The fight for dignity and inclusion for LGBT individuals in our Armed Forces should remain a steadfast priority for the Department of Defense.

Today, LGBT Americans are defending our nation all over the world. We were troubled to learn that, for the first time since the repeal of DADT, the Department of Defense failed to recognize June as LGBT Pride Month. In years past, a memo was circulated from the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to empower LGBT service members, civilians and their allies. The DoD also held events at the Pentagon and military bases, recognizing Pride Month without asking for special permission or exception. This year, however, the DoD did not circulate a memo endorsing the observance and celebration of this month. In addition, no high-level department leaders participated in the Department of Defense’s Association of LGBT Employees and Allies’ recent Pride Month celebration. According to the Washington Post, the Pentagon’s design office was prohibited from creating official event materials because the DoD did not officially sanction Pride Month.

In consideration of these troubling reports, we respectfully request you provide the following information:

1. Please explain the decision made by the Pentagon's Personnel and Readiness Office to not issue a memo celebrating the contributions of LGBT Americans, as it has done in years past. Please also identify the office, agency or person responsible for determining when DOD will issue memos celebrating or highlighting cultural groups or achievements.
2. What role, if any, did Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Robert L. Wilkie play in making the decision not to issue a memo celebrating Pride Month?
3. We were disappointed to learn that none of DOD’s leadership would be participating in DOD’s annual Pride event. Please explain why Department of Defense leadership

declined, during DOD's annual Pride event on Monday, June 11, 2018, to speak to their fellow service members and employees?

The absence of demonstrative support from DOD leadership at events like these can have the effect of isolating our LGBT service members and employees. The Department of Defense cannot and must not retreat when it comes to ensuring Americans' ability to share in our country's promise, nor when it comes to truly living up to our founding ideals.

Thank you for your attention and prompt response regarding this issue. We look forward to hearing from you, and hope that we may continue to work together to ensure our military remains strong and diverse.

Sincerely,

Anthony G. Brown
Member of Congress

Robert Brady
Member of Congress

Susan Davis
Member of Congress

Jackie Speier
Member of Congress

Beto O'Rourke
Member of Congress

Donald Norcross
Member of Congress

Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress

Salud Carbajal
Member of Congress