

"They've pretty much shrugged it off," said Johnson, who rejoined the Army last fall after nearly a decade away. "Most of them were wondering why I had a nine-year gap in service. When I told them it was because of 'don't ask, don't tell,' they shrugged it off."

"That was a pleasant surprise."

Six months after the military dropped the controversial "don't ask, don't tell" law barring gays from serving openly, Pentagon officials and gay rights advocates say the policy change has largely been a non-issue, with few complaints and no major headaches resulting from the new rules.

Pentagon spokeswoman Eileen Lainez said the repeal is "proceeding smoothly across the Department of Defense," which officials there credit to the "enforcement of standards by our military leaders" and "servicemembers' adherence to core values that include discipline and respect."

Officials at the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, a pro-repeal group which offers free legal assistance to troops on discrimination issues, said they've heard only a few minor complaints from military members about the implementation of the repeal.

"We had thought this would be largely a non-event, and that has been the case," said Aubrey Sarvis, executive director of the group. "I think the new regulations permitting gays and lesbians to serve are unambiguous, and the commands have all made it abundantly clear that this is the direction the force is going."

Military leaders have seen pushback from conservative groups on some high-profile post-repeal stories—such as a picture of a gay Marine kissing his boyfriend which circulated earlier this month—but haven't faced any lawsuits or mass resignations predicted by some opponents.

Last month's White House dinner honoring Iraq War veterans included several same-sex couples among the invitees, but in their remarks military leaders didn't even note that such a public display would have resulted in those troops' dismissal just a few months earlier.

Johnson was booted out of the Army in 2003 under "don't ask, don't tell." After he shared his secret with some friends, others in his unit started grilling them about his sexual orientation. Feeling pressure from both his friends and others, Johnson eventually came clean to his superiors.

As the political winds changed last year, Johnson said he was speaking with recruiters about returning even before the repeal went into effect last September.

"Their biggest issue was asking when I could start, not worrying about my personal life," he said. "There has been no backlash, nothing to worry about."

Repeal opponents remain skeptical. Elaine Donnelly, president of the conservative Center for Military Readiness, said plenty of troops remain opposed to serving with openly gay colleagues, but fear they'll lose their job if they object to the military's new pro-gay agenda.

"The entire administration . . . has imposed 'zero tolerance' policies against persons who are not enthusiastic supporters of LGBT law," she said. "This is what we predicted, but the effects will not be seen quickly, especially in an election year."

Much of the repeal fight has already shifted to the next rights battlefield, whether same-sex couples should receive the same housing and medical benefits as their straight peers.

Sarvis said the current benefits rules create two different classes of servicemembers. Opponents argue that the rights groups are trying to use the military to force radical social changes.

Meanwhile, Donnelly said that she has heard from a number of troops unhappy with the changes, who are simply waiting for their contracts to expire before leaving the service. That could cause major problems in coming months and years, she said.

Petty Officer 1st Class Jeremy Johnson, a member of active-duty gay-rights group OutServe, said he anticipates more problems in the future, although nothing to the extent of Donnelly's predictions. Many of the gay troops he knows have not yet talked about their personal lives with their work colleagues, somewhat delaying the cultural impact of the repeal.

"This was never about having people come flying out of the closet," he said. "It was about knowing you can't be fired for being found out. There's going to be a natural transition as more people become comfortable with the idea."

Johnson, who was forced from the military in 2007, became the first openly gay person to reenlist after the repeal was finalized. He said his commanders have warned him that he could be singled out for his public role, but so far it hasn't caused any real conflicts.

"I anticipate that this isn't over, but I don't anticipate major problems, either," he said.

#### HONORING THE LIFE OF STATE SENATOR GARY W. KUBLY

#### HON. BETTY McCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 21, 2012

Ms. McCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I rise today to pay tribute to the life of Senator Gary W. Kubly, public servant and Lutheran Pastor. Senator Kubly passed away earlier this month at the age of 68, after a hard-fought battle with Lou Gehrig's Disease. As our community mourns the loss of this beloved civic leader, we must pause to celebrate Gary's legacy and reflect upon his years of service.

Gary's lifelong career of service began when he joined the United States Air Force during the late 1960s. After leaving the military, Gary became a public school teacher prior to moving to Minnesota in 1970 to attend Luther Theological Seminary in Saint Paul. After graduating from Luther Seminary in 1974, Gary began his career as a Lutheran Pastor, serving two churches near Granite Falls, Minnesota prior to his election to the Minnesota House of Representatives in 1996.

Throughout his 15 years in the Minnesota Legislature, Gary touched many lives, and his absence will be felt by all who had the privilege of knowing him. I was honored to serve with him for four years in the Minnesota House of Representatives prior to his election to the Minnesota Senate. He was a constant voice for the residents of the counties he served in southwestern Minnesota, making sure rural communities had an advocate at the Capitol.

Whether serving our country, his Church or his constituents, Gary's dedication to serving others was remarkable. His sense of duty and honor are irreplaceable, and his voice will be missed at the Capitol.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in this tribute to Senator Gary W. Kubly.

#### CAPTAIN THOMAS "BILL" DILLION AND THE FIREFIGHTER'S PRAYER

#### HON. TED POE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 21, 2012

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, Monday morning I attended the funeral of Captain Thomas "Bill" Dillion of the Houston Fire Department. Captain Dillion was rushing into a house fire on March 14 when he apparently died of a heart attack. Captain Dillion has three children, was 49 years of age, and had spent 23 years with the Houston Fire Department. Bill's crew at Station 69 spoke about his courage and how his contagious happy mood was so infectious. He was a firemen's firefighter.

Mr. Speaker, the firefighters have a prayer to the Great Almighty about their public service, saving lives and saving property. Here is how the prayer reads:

When I am called to duty, God  
Wherever flames may rage  
Give me strength to save a life  
Whatever be its age.

Let me embrace a little child  
Before it is too late  
Or save an older person from  
The horror of that fate.

Enable me to be alert  
And hear the weakest shout,  
And quickly and efficiently  
To put the fire out.

I want to fill my calling  
To give the best in me,  
To guard my friend and neighbor  
And protect their property.

And, if, according to Your will,  
I must answer death's call,  
Please bless, with Your protecting hand,  
My family one and all.

And that's just the way it is.

#### HONORING MILAN DOSHI

#### HON. PETE OLSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 21, 2012

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, I am privileged to interact with some of the brightest students in the 22nd Congressional District who serve on my Congressional Youth Advisory Council. I have gained much by listening to the high school students who are the future of this great nation. They provide important insight into the concerns of our younger constituents and hopefully get a better sense of the importance of being an active participant in the political process. Many of the students have written short essays on a variety of topics and I am pleased to share these with my House colleagues.

Milan Doshi is a junior at Elkins High School in Fort Bend County, Texas. His essay topic is: In your opinion, what role should government play in our lives?

Abraham Lincoln once said that this is a "government of the people, by the people, for the people." Government is an entity that plays just as much a role in our lives as we allow it to play. As the current election is just around the corner, many of the issues that have prevailed in the presidential debates include what role the government

should play in our economy, foreign policy, and our daily lives.

Many Americans believe that if the United States had learned from the past, they would have realized that the greater the country got involved in the economy, with countries around the world, and in our daily lives, the greater the magnitude of the problems in the status quo would become. Many Americans believe that our government has not learned from the past and continues to make the same mistakes that once made its population distraught. Even though our country's interaction with foreign policy and the economy may not directly impact us, the interaction somehow influences a majority of America's population in their daily lives. This impact on the status quo and on the population's mindset is indicative through stories in the news, through personal experiences, and through observations of our surroundings.

Overall, our government should understand that the role that they play in our lives should be in balance. Foreign policy has made our country one of the most powerful countries around the world. We have a prestigious navy, a strong air force, and, most importantly, the most dominating army that money can buy; however, in this case, America's dedication towards the development of its army has preoccupied them to a point where it has reallocated funds from other areas that desperately need them. This reallocation would allow the government to play a more conservative role in our lives. If the funds that were dedicated towards foreign policy were reevaluated, I'm sure there are places where cuts can be made and the money saved be reallocated to other sectors. This begs the question of which sector requires the money the most, based on its influence on our daily lives. The education sector consists of the building blocks of this country and preoccupies most teenagers' daily lives. If more money was invested in this sector, we would be able to hire more experienced teachers, give teachers more freedom to construct their courses, create more effective ways of assessment, as well as pay our teachers more. What this would inevitably lead to is lesser involvement in education, for kids my age, most of our daily lives, and more freedom for teachers to foster growth and meet the needs of individual students, as well as give students the freedom to express themselves without being restricted to the methods of the government. This is important in demonstrating the balance that is necessary of government in our daily lives. If the government allowed students to embrace education, the United States would be able to be competitive with the education systems of other countries around the world. With smarter future generations, America would not make the same mistakes it made in the past that led to economic collapses such as the one that occurred during the Great Depression. Individuals in the American government would finally realize that they ought to play a smaller role in the economy by allowing it to be the one that causes its own downfall and also its own rebuilding. Over the past few years, it has become evident that the greater the role that government plays in the economy, the further it goes into shambles and the more jobs that are lost. This is important because even though I have been fortunate enough to have a family that has not had to go through the stresses of job loss, the effects of thousands of jobs going away are being felt by families all across the United States, affecting their daily lives, in how they live and how they interact with the people around them. If the government did not play as large a role as it is playing right now, we would probably see the economy col-

lapse and then gradually begin to rebuild itself, creating more jobs, steadying the economy, and more importantly, bringing stability to families across the country.

Thus, the role that government ought to play in our lives should be one in balance and it ought to be the government's responsibility to make sure their actions are properly affecting their population. However, in situations where the government loses sight of the problems that lay ahead due to their actions, it becomes the peoples' responsibility to speak and make sure their voice is heard. Because, after all, as Abraham Lincoln once said, this is a "government of the people, by the people, for the people."

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

#### HON. PETE SESSIONS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, March 21, 2012*

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 114, had I been present, I would have voted "yea."

#### IN RECOGNITION OF THE SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF THE PATIENT PROTECTION AND AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

#### HON. LAURA RICHARDSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, March 21, 2012*

Ms. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the second anniversary of the enactment of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. In the two years since its enactment, the Affordable Care Act has been good for seniors, good for women, good for small businesses, and good for all Americans.

As the Affordable Care Act is implemented, it will continue to expand access to affordable, quality health care for over 30 million Americans and will work to reign in the ever-escalating costs of health care. Passage of the Affordable Care Act was a major step toward fulfilling the promise all Americans were pledged: the promise of unalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness which quality healthcare embodies.

For the people I represent in the 37th District of California, the Affordable Care Act will improve coverage for 299,000 residents who already have insurance. It will give tax credits and other assistance to up to 146,000 families and 15,100 small businesses to help them afford coverage. Health care reform will also improve Medicare for 63,000 beneficiaries in my district, including closing the prescription drug "donut hole" once and for all.

In 2010, the Affordable Care Act made it possible for 354,592 Medicare beneficiaries in California to receive a \$250 rebate to help cover the cost of their prescription drugs when they hit the donut hole. In 2011, 319,429 Medicare beneficiaries received a 50 percent discount—an average savings of \$538 per person—on brand-name prescription drugs when they hit the coverage gap. That's a total savings of over \$171 million for seniors in California alone! In my district, 3,200 seniors received prescription drug discounts worth \$1.5 million, an average discount of \$460 per senior.

The Affordable Care Act extends coverage to 92,500 uninsured residents of the 37th District and will guarantee that 17,500 residents with pre-existing conditions can obtain the health insurance they need. Since enactment, health care reform has extended insurance coverage to 5,599 Californians through the new Pre-Existing Condition Insurance Plan.

The Affordable Care Act protects 1,100 families from bankruptcy due to unaffordable health care costs and currently allows 59,000 young adults to obtain coverage on their parents' insurance plans. The new law provides millions of dollars in new funding for 11 community health centers in my district. And finally, it will reduce the cost of uncompensated care for hospitals and other health care providers by \$125 million annually.

Mr. Speaker, as we approach the two year anniversary of the enactment of the Affordable Care Act, an attack on women's access to affordable, quality, and necessary healthcare services is underway. From the comments made by Rush Limbaugh about Georgetown Law Student Sandra Fluke, to Republican attempts to roll back coverage and restrict access to birth control, the GOP's war on women stands in stark contrast to the Administration's goal of ensuring that women have access to the healthcare services they need to remain healthy.

As a female Member of Congress, I understand that women have unique health care needs, and are often the ones who make health care decisions for their families. I voted for and strongly support the Affordable Care Act because it provides important benefits for women and their families. The Affordable Care Act helps women by eliminating the discriminatory gender rating system, making sure that insurance companies do not consider pregnancy grounds for denying coverage, and doing away with all pre-existing conditions.

Thanks to the Affordable Care Act, all Americans joining new insurance plans have the freedom to choose from any primary care provider, OB-GYN, or pediatrician in their health plan's network, or emergency care outside of the plan's network, without a referral. Under the Affordable Care Act, women joining a new health care plan can receive recommended preventive services, like mammograms, new baby care and well-child visits, and an annual wellness visit with no out-of-pocket costs. In 2011, over 6 million people with private insurance coverage in California gained preventative service coverage with no cost sharing as a result of the Affordable Care Act.

Before enactment of the Affordable Care Act, women could be charged more for individual insurance policies simply because of their gender. A 22-year-old woman could be charged 150 percent the premium that a 22-year-old man paid. In 2014, insurers will not be able to charge women higher premiums than they charge men. The law takes strong action to control health care costs, including helping states crack down on excessive premium increases and making sure most of your premium dollars go toward your health care.

The Affordable Care Act also allows young adults under the age of 26 to stay on their parents' health insurance plan. This provision has expanded access to health insurance coverage for 2.5 million young people nationwide. In my district, 7,000 young adults have taken advantage of this provision and are now covered under their parents' plan.