

# A Message from the Executive Director



December 22, 2010

## The End of Don't Ask, Don't Tell

Today, President Obama signed ground breaking legislation to repeal Don't Ask, Don't Tell," clearing the way for gay men and lesbians to serve openly in the military. **The historic repeal of DADT does three important things that contribute to promoting the safety of the LGBTQ communities:**

### IT MAKES LGBT PEOPLE WHO VOLUNTEER TO SERVE IN THE MILITARY SAFER

The repeal of DADT makes lesbians and gay men who volunteer to serve in the military safer by providing them with the ability to seek protection against bias-related violence that they may experience within or outside of the military without fear that they will lose their job for seeking that protection. AVP has found that people of color and transgender people are more vulnerable to targeted hate violence – in 2009, 50% of those murdered were transgender women and 79% were people of color. People of color have also been disproportionately affected by the DADT policy, and this repeal makes a tremendous impact providing much-needed protections to people of color who serve in the military.

### IT MAKES ALL LGBTQ PEOPLE SAFER

In addition to the important step of ending the institutional discrimination against lesbians and gay men who serve this country's military, the repeal of DADT sets a legal standard of respect and tolerance LGBTQ that will have the long-term effect of decreasing hate violence against all LGBTQ people. At AVP, we have seen, over time, increases in violence against LGBTQ people as we fight to end discrimination against us. This violence seems to rise at times where this fight for fairness is successful, so in the coming year we will watch what is happening with caution. **However, in the long run the acceptance of openly gay people into the military will have a positive effect on issues of hate and discrimination.**

### IT MOVES US CLOSER TO THE EQUALTY WE DESERVE

**DADT, along with last year's passage of the Matthew Shepard James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes law, has changed the legal and social landscape of this country.** The movement for equality in this country for all people is a forward movement and DADT brings us forward. The passage of the Hate Crimes law and the repeal of DADT show that LGBTQ anti-discrimination legislation has the support of a very broad base of people who understand that it is important that everyone in this country is treated fairly and equally.

At the end of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century with the passage of the Hate Crimes law and the repeal of DADT is a huge accomplishment for every American. As we enter the next decade we will continue to work together to end hate violence and discrimination against the LGBTQ communities.

Very truly yours,

Sharon Stapel  
Executive Director