

January 15, 2010

Center For American Progress Survey Data from Democracy Corps Oversample

To: Center for American Progress

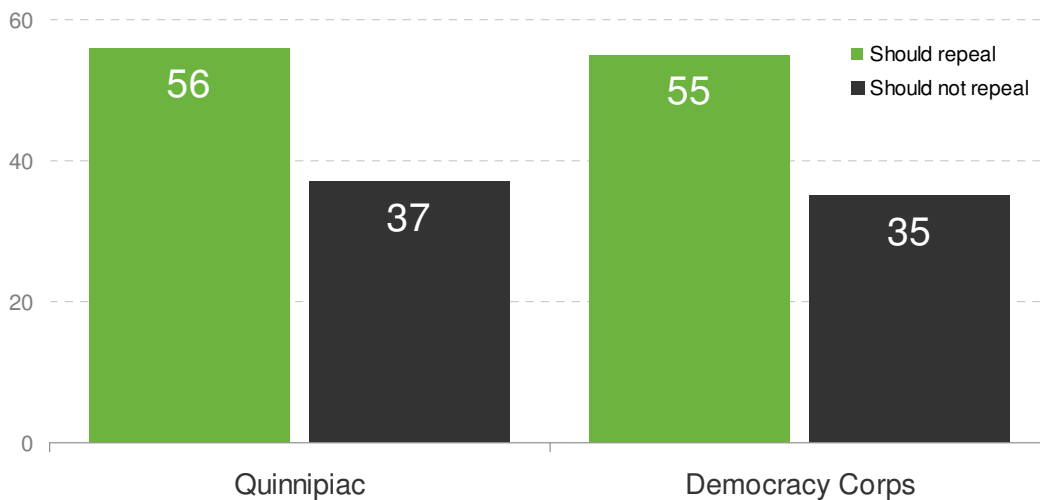
From: Stan Greenberg and David Walker

After the 1994 midterm elections, this polling firm conducted a major post-election research project for the Democratic Leadership Conference in which we were candid about the role the “gays in the military” issue played in the Democratic losses of the House and Senate.

That was then. Since that time, the country has moved to a different place on LGBT issues, and this progress is reflected in voters’ current support for ending the ban on gays and lesbians serving openly in the military. In a Democracy Corps survey taken in November 2009, likely voters supported ending the ban by a 55 to 35 percent margin.¹ This finding parallels the outcome of a Quinnipiac survey taken in April 2009.²

■ Figure 1: Stable Majority for Change

Federal law currently prohibits openly gay men and women from serving in the military. Do you think this law should be repealed or not?



¹ Data from a Democracy Corps survey of 847 likely '10 voters conducted Nov 12-16, 2009. MoE +/- 3.4

² Data from a Quinnipiac survey of 2,041 registered voters conducted in April, 2009. MoE +/- 2.2

Note that we intentionally phrased this question using the most conservative language possible to avoid any suggestion of bias. A July 2008 Washington Post/ABC News survey showed that 75 percent of Americans believed gay people who are open about their sexual orientation should be allowed to serve in the U.S. military. A May 2009 Gallup survey showed 69 percent favoring “allowing openly gay men and lesbian women to serve in the military.”

What is most striking about the Democracy Corps findings are some of the subgroup results. Only 53 percent of self-ascribed Republicans oppose lifting the ban, compared to 71 percent of Democrats who favor repeal. Moreover, at a time when Independent voters join with Republicans on a number of key issues, Independents side with Democrats on ending “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (58 percent favor repealing the ban, 30 percent oppose). Other swing voters, most notably Catholics (64 – 29 percent in favor of repeal), prove even more supportive of repealing the ban.

Similarly, these results do not change among voters in congressional battleground seats (54 percent favor lifting the ban, 35 percent oppose), in seats representing recent Democratic pickups (55 – 33 percent) or seats home to vulnerable Democrats (56 – 33 percent).

Opponents of lifting the ban argue this change will weaken the United States military—voters disagree. In fact, only one in four (24 percent) believe lifting the ban will make the military weaker, 11 percent argue it will make it stronger and most (61 percent) believe it will make no difference.

Conclusion

This isn’t the issue it once was. A comfortable majority support lifting the ban and even among opposition elements, we do not see nearly the same intensity we saw 16 years ago. Voters are ready to end this policy.