



President Obama signed the landmark repeal of the military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy Wednesday morning, handing a major victory to advocates of gay rights and fulfilling a campaign promise to do away with a practice that he has called discriminatory.

Casting the repeal in terms of past civil rights struggles, Obama said he was proud to sign a law that "will strengthen our national security and uphold the ideals that our fighting men and women risk their lives to defend."

In remarks before signing the repeal, he added: "No longer will our country be denied the service of thousands of patriotic Americans who are forced to leave the military - regardless of their skills, no matter their bravery or their zeal, no matter their years of exemplary performance - because they happen to be gay. No longer will tens of thousands of Americans in uniform be asked to live a lie, or look over their shoulder in order to serve the country that they love."

The signing does not immediately implement the repeal but instead begins the process of ending the ban on gays serving openly in the military.

The law will not actually change until the Pentagon certifies to Congress that the military has met several conditions, including education and training programs for the troops.

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