

"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