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PRESS ADVISORY

For Immediate Release

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MARRIAGE EQUALITY USA CELEBRATES END OF DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL

San Francisco, CA • September 20, 2011 — Marriage Equality USA today celebrates the beginning of lesbian and gay members of the armed forces serving openly with dignity and urges extension of full military benefits, including marriage equality, to lesbian and gay soldiers.

"Today, we mark the end of an era of silence and the beginning of a new time. Today, our nation's military begins the first steps to moving us forward. For 18 years, we watched this policy cut short the livelihoods of patriotic Americans and force many more into silent service. Now, the time to remain silent and in hiding is over. This is our time to celebrate; this is our time to declare our independence from 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell,'" said Ty Redhouse, Marriage Equality USA's Military and Veterans Liaison.

"The end of Don't Ask, Don't Tell signals a pivotal moment in the struggle of lesbian and gay people for equality. Surely -- now that we have established a national policy that lesbian and gay people can serve openly in the military, including risking their lives for our country, lesbian and gay people should have the freedom to marry in this country they are willing to give their lives to defend. I can imagine no better way to honor their service," said John Lewis, Marriage Equality USA's Legal Director.

"Today, we raise our voices in a cheer before we begin the work of what comes next. Today, we are more American than we were 24 hours ago. But partners and legally married spouses of lesbian, gay, and bisexual service members are still excluded from military spousal benefits, and transgender service members must still serve in silence. We must fulfill the promise of America and rectify these continued injustices. It's the American way," said Redhouse

Founded in 2000, Marriage Equality USA® is a national grassroots organization whose mission is to secure legally-recognized civil marriage equality for all, at the federal and state levels, without regard to gender identity or sexual orientation.