

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 12, 2013

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Northwest
Washington, District of Columbia 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Like you, we welcomed the Supreme Court's decision in *U.S. v. Windsor* striking down provisions of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) defining a spouse as a person of the opposite sex. We commend your direction to the Attorney General to work with members of your Cabinet "to review all relevant federal statutes to ensure this decision, including its implications for Federal benefits and obligations, is implemented swiftly and smoothly."

In light of the Supreme Court's decision, we firmly believe that all veterans and their spouses should be awarded the equal benefits they deserve. On July 1, we wrote to Secretary Shinseki asking that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) grant all available rights and benefits to same-sex couples by recognizing marriages legal in the state of celebration, regardless of the state of residence. This letter urged Secretary Shinseki to work with the Department of Justice in determining a new set of regulations in the wake of the Supreme Court's ruling.

We understand from Secretary Shinseki's reply to our letter that he is awaiting your guidance before ceasing to apply title 38 definitions requiring that a spouse be a person of the opposite sex for the purposes of veterans' benefits. We therefore respectfully ask that you immediately direct Secretary Shinseki to stop applying title 38 spousal definitions to exclude same-sex spouses from VA benefits. We further request that you direct the VA to update its regulations swiftly in order to grant full benefits to all veterans and their spouses.

We know you share our belief that veterans who serve our country should not be denied the benefits they have earned because of whom they love. We look forward to working with you to ensure that the VA quickly grants the benefits that all veterans and their spouses deserve.

Sincerely,



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senate



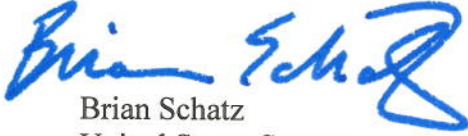
Chris Coons
United States Senate



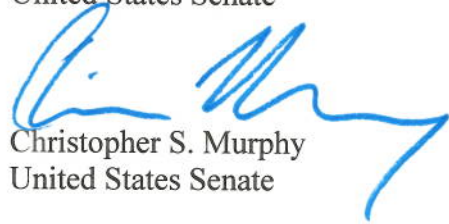
Mark Udall
United States Senate



Kirsten E. Gillibrand
United States Senate



Brian Schatz
United States Senate



Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senate