Lack of Marriage Recognition Harms Military Families and Undermines National Security

*Amicus Brief filed today to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit*

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WASHINGTON, DC – The OutServe-Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (OutServe-SLDN) and the American Military Partner Association (AMPA) today jointly filed a friend of the court brief [Amicus Brief] with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit in the cases of *Kitchen v. Herbert*, decided by a federal district court in Utah, and *Bishop v. Smith*, decided by a federal district court in Oklahoma, arguing that the uneven patchwork of states providing marriage equality harms military families, undermines national security, complicates the payment of earned veterans benefits, and harms veterans. The brief, on which the law firm Chadbourne & Parke serves as counsel, urges the Court to end the discrimination caused by the lack of marriage equality by recognizing a constitutional right for people of the same sex to marry on the same terms as opposite-sex couples.
“Our gay and lesbian service members put their lives on the line for every state in our union, and it is shameful that they and their families are treated as second-class by many of those states,” said Stephen Peters, president of AMPA. “Our military families deserve better than to have to worry about where in America they will be stationed because of the impact of marriage inequality, and our veterans certainly deserve access to the benefits and support they earned serving our nation, no matter what state they live in.”

"Our families are no different than any other families in the Department of Defense and Veteran Affairs and they deserve to be treated the same,” said Jeffrey Mueller, Co-Chairman of the Board for OutServe-SLDN. “The extra burden of marriage inequality is affecting military readiness and ultimately affects our national defense. Moving with the military is hard enough, but the added stress of moving to a state that will not recognize your marriage impacts their ability to do their job and just isn't right. All military families should be treated the same no matter where they serve our great country."

The brief asserts that: “The lack of marriage recognition is a strain on these military families, and an unnecessary distraction for service members who all too often find themselves in harm's way while trying to protect this country. Ending this discrimination by requiring states to recognize the right of same-sex couples to marry would protect these families, and best serve the needs of the modern military.”

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ABOUT OUTSERVE-SERVICEMEMBERS LEGAL DEFENSE NETWORK: Since 1993, OutServe-SLDN has been the heir to the legacy of providing legal services to service members and veterans. From representing over 12,000 service members during the era of DADT, leading the fight to repeal DADT, being integral in the Windsor suit to overturn DOMA, through winning the federal lawsuit, McLaughlin v. Hagel that provided benefits to same sex partners of military members, OutServe-SLDN has been on the frontlines for over 20 years. Today, OutServe-SLDN has over 75,000 followers worldwide and over 6,900 active members serving and leading more than 80 chapters around the globe. OS-SLDN provides free and direct legal assistance to service members and veterans affected by the repealed "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" law and the prior regulatory ban on open service, as well as those currently serving who may experience harassment or discrimination. For more information, visit www.outserve-sldn.org.

ABOUT THE AMERICAN MILITARY PARTNER ASSOCIATION: The American Military Partner Association (AMPA), a non-partisan and non-profit 501(c)3 organization, is the nation’s premier resource and support network for LGBT military spouses and their families. Founded and led by same-gender military partners in 2009 as the Campaign for Military Partners, AMPA is committed to education, advocacy, and support for our “modern military families”. For more information, visit www.militarypartners.org