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HEADS OF MILITARY ARCHDIOCESE, SUBCOMMITTEE FOR PROMOTION, DEFENSE OF MARRIAGE OBJECT TO DEFENSE DEPARTMENT SAME-SEX DOMESTIC PARTNERS POLICY

February 15, 2013

***Policy undermines marriage between one man, one woman
Violates Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA)
Threatens conscience rights of military personnel***

WASHINGTON— Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio of the Archdiocese for the Military Services USA, and Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone of San Francisco, chairman of the bishops' Subcommittee for the Promotion and Defense of Marriage, voiced concern February 15 about a new Department of Defense (DOD) policy on "same-sex domestic partners" and about related comments made by President Obama in his State of the Union address.

Archbishop Broglio questioned how the department could set a policy that undermines the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) and said the new policy could threaten conscience rights of members of the military. Forcing an officer "to violate his conscience would not be fair," he said.

Archbishop Cordileone highlighted the policy's potential effect on children.

"Children, who are our future, have a right to be raised by their mother and father together," he said. "For the sake of our nation, and especially for the sake of our children, marriage should be promoted and protected at every opportunity, never undermined."

The full response follows.

Today, Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, Archbishop for the Military Services USA, and Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone of San Francisco, chairman of the bishops' Subcommittee for The Promotion and Defense of marriage, responded with concern to a new Department of Defense Policy issued this week regarding "same-sex domestic partners" and to related comments made by President Obama in his State of the Union address.

The DOD policy allocates marriage-like benefits to persons in same-sex relationships. In an apparent reference to the new policy, President Obama said, "We will ensure equal treatment for all service members, and equal benefits for their families – gay and straight."

In response to the President's remarks and the new policy, Archbishop Broglio said, "This new policy under the guise of 'equal benefits' undermines marriage as the union of one man and one woman because it treats two persons of the same sex as spouses. Can the Secretary of Defense establish a policy that undermines federal law as established by DOMA?" Noting the possible negative effects on religious liberty, Archbishop Broglio asked, "Could a JAG officer choose, out of religious or moral convictions, not to give legal advice on marital and family issues to same-sex 'partners' without being subject to discipline? Forcing the officer to violate his conscience would not be fair."

Archbishop Cordileone also expressed concern over the new policy. "For one thing, it undermines the Defense of Marriage Act, which is the law of the land," he said. He added:

"There is no question that all service members should be treated equally, but it is not discrimination to treat different things differently. Only a man and a woman can bring children into the world, and so marriage, as the foundation of the family, by its very nature can only be between a man and a woman. In fact, by singling out two people of the same sex in a sexual relationship for special consideration, the policy excludes other possible types of relationships between two adults, thus treating the same thing differently. Actually, then, it is rather this policy that discriminates. More importantly, children, who are our future, have a right to be raised by their mother and father together. For the sake of our nation, and especially for the sake of our children, marriage should be promoted and protected at every opportunity, never undermined."

The new Department of Defense policy memorandum was issued by Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta earlier this week. The policy entitled "Extending Benefits to Same-Sex Domestic Partners of Military Members" must be implemented by the military services no later than October 1, 2013. Under the new policy, all that is required for a "domestic partnership" is a committed relationship between two adults of the same sex who are not in a marriage, civil union, or domestic partnership with anyone else. In many respects, "same-sex domestic partners" of military members will be treated like spouses. For instance, the "partner" of the military member will be entitled to a dependent military ID card, legal assistance from the military, and base exchange and commissary privileges. If both "partners" are in the military, they would be eligible for a joint duty assignment – what was customarily referred to as a joint spouse assignment. President Obama made his remarks on Tuesday in his State of the Union address before a joint session of the United States Congress.

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