Today, US Congressman Michael Honda (D-CA), vice-chair of the Congressional LGBT Equality Caucus, delivers the following statement on the floor of the US House of Representatives:

I rise today in support of the historic official repeal of Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell. Today, nearly two decades after its enactment, our lesbian, gay, and bisexual service members can finally serve and defend the country that they love without the fear of being discharged. Never again will members of our military be forced to serve in the shadows, to lie about their identity, or to be afraid to talk about the people that they love.

Let us remember the 14,000 loyal service members who were discharged under this discriminatory policy over the years, for now they can serve alongside their military friends and family with dignity and honor. Let us also remember those individuals who served in silence and sacrificed their lives so that we, as Americans, could live freely.

As vice-Chair of the LGBT Caucus in Congress, I see the repeal of Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell as another step towards ensuring that all citizens, both inside and outside of the military, are never subject to discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Today signifies a crucial milestone in history and is a victory not just for the LGBTQ community, but for America as a whole.