

Polish off your crystal ball. Play HuffPost's Predict the News.

December 6, 2010

Replay

shutterfly

Gift special moments to someone special.



Up to 30% Off
Make your book

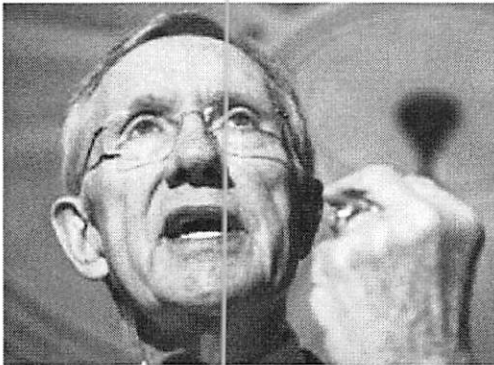


This is the print preview: [Back to normal view](#) »

Sam Stein
stein@huffingtonpost.com | HuffPost
Reporting

Top Democrats 'Supportive' Of Keeping Senate In Session For 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' Repeal

First Posted: 12- 6-10 03:11 PM | Updated: 12- 6-10 03:11 PM



WASHINGTON -- Top Senate Democrats are willing to keep the chamber in session longer than expected in order to overturn the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. But leadership is not yet ready to commit to working up to -- or even through -- the Christmas break.

A Senate aide told The Huffington Post on Monday morning that Majority Leader Harry Reid has been "supportive" of the idea that lawmakers be kept in D.C. to pass a defense authorization bill that has, attached to it, language that would allow gays to serve openly in the armed services. That same procedural strategy is being pushed by Sen. Joseph Lieberman (I-Conn.), one of the chief advocates for overturning DADT.

"Sen. Lieberman believes that there are at least 60 votes to repeal 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' this year, provided that leadership allows time for sufficient

debate and amendments," Lieberman spokeswoman Erika Masonhall said. "Wanting to go home is not an acceptable excuse for failing to pass a bill that provides essential support for our troops and veterans and failing to take action that the president, the Secretary of Defense and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff have called for."

Hours later, Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.) another leading advocate for overturning DADT, offered her support for Lieberman's position.

But keeping the Senate in session, perhaps through Christmas, requires the entire caucus being onboard. And currently, Reid, Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) and others have their hands full resolving the tax-cut debate (a meeting at the White House with President Obama is scheduled for 3:30 p.m. Monday), so much so that they haven't been able to take the temperature of all their colleagues.

An aide to Reid didn't dispute the "supportive" characterization, but cautioned that the office doesn't "have an answer" with respect to keeping the Senate running.

Prolonging the lame-duck session could be the one maneuver that DADT opponents have for getting the law repealed any time soon. During an appearance on "Meet the Press" on Sunday, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-K.Y.) proclaimed that a defense authorization bill would take two weeks to pass -- a timeframe that would be utterly rare for consideration of the typical defense authorization bill but one that would nevertheless move a vote until the next Republican-dominated Congress.

That said, merely keeping the current Congress in session is not a silver bullet. As the Senate aide told The Huffington Post, "the issue now is finding a process that will satisfy a group of Republicans" who are pushing for "a sufficient number of amendments [to be] allowed on defense authorization." Without that amendment process meeting their liking, the possibility remains that they -- namely, Sens. Susan Collins (R-ME) and Olympia Snowe (R-ME) and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) -- won't support cloture.