

Navy suspends policy to allow gay weddings

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May 12, 2011

WASHINGTON (RNS) The U.S. Navy reversed course Tuesday (May 10) on plans to allow chaplains to officiate at same-sex marriage ceremonies once the military's ban on openly gay members is repealed.

Rear Adm. Mark Tidd, the Navy chief of chaplains, said in a brief announcement to chaplains his previous memo about the repeal of the Don't Ask/Don't Tell policy was "suspended until further notice."

The reversal follows opposition from Republican leaders and some chaplains who argued that permitting gay weddings on bases in states where same-sex marriage is legal violated the federal Defense of Marriage Act, which defines marriage as between one man and one woman.

"It was suspended in order for us to thoroughly review the associated legal and policy matters," said Cmdr. Danny Hernandez, a Navy spokesman.

Eileen Lainez, a Pentagon spokeswoman, recently told the Navy Times that "DOMA does not limit the type of religious ceremonies a chaplain may perform in a chapel on a military installation."

On Wednesday, Lainez also said the policy is under review.

In his April 13 memo, Tidd said a chaplain "may officiate" at a same-sex wedding if participation is "consistent with the tenets of his or her religious organization."

Elaine Donnelly, president of the Center for Military Readiness, who opposes gays serving openly in the military, said the Navy's action could be temporary and urged Congress to review Pentagon plans before a

full repeal.

"This weather-vane policy is likely to change back as soon as all the branches of service get on board and Congress looks the other way," she said.