

US Defense Secretary on Transgenders: 'Every Qualified American' Should Have Opportunity to Serve in Military

Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said on Sunday the U.S. military should review its ban on allowing transgender people to serve openly in the armed forces, saying that "every qualified American" should have an opportunity to serve.

President **Barack Obama** has made lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights a priority during his time in office, and in 2010 signed legislation ending the "don't ask, don't tell" policy that had prevented gay men and women from serving openly in the military.

Hagel did not make clear whether he felt the ban on transgender troops should be reversed.

"The issue of **transgender** is a bit more complicated because it has a medical component to it," Hagel told ABC's *This Week* program. "These issues require medical attention. Austere locations where we put our men and women in many cases don't always provide that kind of opportunity."

But in backing a review of the ban, Hagel said: "I'm open to those assessments because, again, I go back to the bottom line: Every qualified American who wants to serve our country should have an opportunity if they fit the qualifications and can do it."

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