



February 24, 2010

### Press Statement

#### **IN DEFIANCE OF SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, CONGRESSIONAL CANDIDATE ISSUES HOMOPHOBIC TIRADE IN THE GUISE OF A CAMPAIGN PRESS RELEASE**

The Central Valley Stonewall Democratic Club, the Stanislaus Democratic Central Committee, and the Progressive Democrats of Stanislaus County condemns congressional candidate Mike Berryhill for using homophobic and hate speech as campaign tools. Such diatribes only distract attention from current issues.

In a press release dated February 4, 2010 Mr. Berryhill stated the following: *"You would think after the recent terror attempt in Detroit that this administration would understand the gravity of the threat this nation faces in Islamic terror," said Berryhill. "Unfortunately, this administration seems to think that the way to strike fear into the hearts of terrorists across the globe is to put gays in the military. They see that and it adds to their appeal in recruiting terrorists. It is clear that this confused administration should stop trying to turn the military into a liberal university and focus on what the American people want: protection of our homeland by stamping out terrorists, not encouraging them."*

With no evidence to justify his position, Berryhill is treading on dangerous ground and is appealing to the fears and misconceptions of an increasingly dwindling percentage of electoral voters. With Stanislaus County and San Joaquin County both experiencing double digit unemployment rates and with million dollar budget cuts deteriorating our education system; we hope Mr. Berryhill will drop the Karl Rove-like campaigning and concentrate on the actual issues that affect our communities.

Mr Berryhill's press release comes on the heels of Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, urging politicians to keep rhetoric at a minimum, arguing they should "keep the impact it will have on our troops firmly in mind." Berryhill's position is in opposition not only to the views of the Secretary of Defense but also to Admiral Mike Mullen, who heads the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and as well as those of retired General Colin Powell who now supports a policy of gays serving openly in the military,

We need to focus on protecting our country at this critical time without diversionary tactics. We also need to bear in mind that the issues of gay equal rights and opportunities boil down to civil rights, and this is no time for Americans to refight old discredited issues of denial of equality to distinct groups of our citizens.

We should remember that all of us, by virtue of our citizenship, deserve equal rights to serve our country. And we should further remind ourselves that one of the leaders on Flight 93 on 9/11 who helped torpedo the terrorists' plan to crash the fourth plane into an American monument, and died in a field in Pennsylvania, was Mark Bingham, a gay athlete and Cal graduate, who was later honored by Senator John McCain for his selfless sacrifice. Surely Mr. Berryhill would want to salute him also.

Homophobia, the politics of divide and extremist rhetoric do not represent true Central Valley values. The Central Valley Stonewall Democratic Club demands a public apology from Mr. Berryhill and a pledge to not use homophobia and fear-mongering in future campaign efforts.

Questions or comments should be directed to Martina Virrey at (209) 937-9038.

The mission of the Central Valley Stonewall Democratic Club is to advance equal rights for all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

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