



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 18, 2008

Contact: Avi Edelman, Media Director

Phone: 240-483-9652

Email: [avi.edelman@gmail.com](mailto:avi.edelman@gmail.com)

## Columbia University College Democrats STATEMENT ON NROTC

Our university remains in the national spotlight over our removal of the Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps (NROTC) as a school-sponsored campus institution. As our student body prepares to engage in a campus-wide dialogue on this issue, the Columbia University College Democrats call on all Columbia students to think critically about the rationale behind the absence of NROTC.

Conservative ideologues and the national news media have long sought to mischaracterize the absence of NROTC from our campus as a reflection of disdain for the military. It is time that this willful ignorance be replaced with a recognition of the facts: the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy (DADT) employed in NROTC violates the civil rights of gay, lesbian, and bisexual students; a policy that so blatantly disregards these rights has no place in our community or on our campus.

DADT directly violates our university nondiscrimination code and defies the principles of free speech, privacy, and equal protection that are at the core of both Columbia's academic mission and the United States Constitution.

We cannot speak for the actions of a previous generation of students, and we are not bound by the values and motivations that led to the original removal of NROTC in 1969. Our responsibility is only to the students of today, students whose fundamental civil rights would be undermined by DADT. The direct discrimination mandated by this policy is unacceptable under all circumstances, regardless of the perpetrating institution.

The Democratic Party has long been the party of inclusion and the vanguard of protections for minorities. The Columbia University College Democrats are committed to continuing the fight against DADT on a campus level and on a national policy level. We are proud of our university for doing its part to further the cause of equal justice. As Democrats, we would expect no less.

###