NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (https://www.ncronline.org)

Objection raised over benefits to same-sex partners of military members

Catholic News Service | Feb. 18, 2013
Washington

The U.S. Defense Department's new policy that confers some military benefits on the same-sex domestic partners of members of the military undermines the traditional definition of marriage, two archbishops said Friday.

Archbishops Timothy Broglio of the U.S. Archdiocese for the Military Services and Salvatore Cordileone of San Francisco, chairman of the bishops' Subcommittee for the Promotion and Defense of Marriage, raised objections to the new policy announced Feb. 11.

"This new policy under the guise of 'equal benefits' undermines marriage as the union of one man and one woman because it treats two persons of the same sex as spouses," Broglio said in a statement. "Can the secretary of defense establish a policy that undermines federal law as established by DOMA (Defense of Marriage Act)?"

DOMA defines marriage as between one man and one woman.

Cordileone, in a separate statement Friday, called the new policy discriminatory. "By singling out two people of the same sex in a sexual relationship for special consideration, the policy excludes other possible types of relationships between two adults, thus treating the same thing differently," he said.

The Defense Department policy extending marriage-like benefits to same-sex partners of military members was announced Feb. 11 by outgoing Defense Secretary Leon Panetta. He said the benefits would include access to military identification cards, military commissaries, and various family support programs on bases and posts.

The government stopped short of extending full benefits because DOMA "is still the law of the land," Panetta said.

In his State of the Union message Feb. 11, President Barack Obama said: "We will ensure equal treatment for all service members, and equal benefits for their families -- gay and straight."

Broglio said the new policy could threaten conscience rights of members of the military. Forcing an officer "to violate his conscience would not be fair," he said.

For example, he asked, could an officer of the Judge Advocate General Corps -- the legal branch of the military -- "choose, out of religious or moral convictions, not to give legal advice on marital and family issues to same-sex 'partners' without being subject to discipline?"

In his remarks, Cordileone said there was "no question that all service members should be treated equally, but it is not discrimination to treat different things differently."

"Only a man and a woman can bring children into the world, and so marriage, as the foundation of the family, by its very nature can only be between a man and a woman," he said, adding that the new benefits policy could itself be seen as discriminatory "by singling out two people of the same sex in a sexual relationship for special consideration."

"The policy excludes other possible types of relationships between two adults, thus treating the same thing differently. Actually, then, it is rather this policy that discriminates," Cordileone said.

He also said it could harm children, who "have a right to be raised by their mother and father together."

"For the sake of our nation, and especially for the sake of our children," he said, "marriage should be promoted and protected at every opportunity, never undermined."

Source URL (retrieved on *02/28/2017 - 11:47*): https://www.ncronline.org/news/politics/objection-raised-over-benefits-same-sex-partners-military-members