



Board of Directors
Rainbow Chamber of Commerce, Silicon Valley
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Rainbow Chamber of Commerce Silicon Valley Statement on President Trump's Announced Ban on Transgender People in the Military

Like so many other Americans, we were shocked and saddened to see President Trump's announcement that qualified transgender Americans might once again be barred from serving in the United States military because of their gender or gender expression. According to the Williams Institute, as many as 15,000 members of the armed services currently serving with honor and distinction could be discharged should this new discriminatory policy go into effect. We join the many veteran and LGBT organizations around the country that have spoken out against this ban, along with the millions of Americans who believe that any person who is willing and able to serve their country should have the opportunity to do so.

Even if this discriminatory policy is never enacted, the President's words are likely to motivate a new wave of discrimination against transgender Americans in the months and years ahead. LGBT veterans will face this discrimination while also struggling with higher health risks, difficulty in accessing re-entry and support services, and the challenge of finding affordable housing. As a result, transgender veterans are four times more likely to live in poverty, and one in five transgender veterans will become homeless. There is simply no excuse for increasing the burden of discrimination on a population already so vulnerable to economic insecurity.

Because so many are effectively excluded from meaningful economic participation, discrimination against LGBT people continues to be an enormous drag on local, national, and global economies. A recent United Nations report estimates that anti-LGBT discrimination costs the global economy as much as \$400 billion annually. Studies by the Williams Institute in New York and Massachusetts have also found that discrimination against LGBT people costs state governments millions from increased reliance on unemployment and housing services and millions more in lost taxable income.

The Rainbow Chamber of Commerce Silicon Valley will continue to support our local LGBT veterans and their families as they return to civilian life and enter the workforce. With over one million LGBT veterans living in the United States and more than 130,000 of those identifying as transgender, LGBT veterans are an important part of our local business communities as both employees and business leaders. We continue to believe that the success of the LGBT community, including our veterans, is essential to a healthy and vibrant local economy.

- *Michael Vargas, Chair, RCCSV Public Policy Committee*
- *Roark Clayton, President, RCCSV*