



ARCHDIOCESE FOR THE MILITARY SERVICES, USA
OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

8 May 2012

The Honorable Howard P. McKeon
House Armed Services Committee Chairman
U.S. House of Representatives
2184 Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman McKeon,

I am writing to encourage your support of the *Akin Amendment* to the **National Defense Authorization Act for 2013**. As the only Catholic diocese charged with the pastoral care of Catholics in the United States Military, I believe that this amendment will help to ensure the religious freedoms of all members of the service to worship freely and without fear of government interference or retribution.

The Catholic Church is unwavering in its commitment to the pastoral care of all persons. Catholic Chaplains share in and demonstrate that commitment when they preach, teach and minister to all service members, including those who experience same-sex attraction.

My specific concerns follow:

1. The rights of chaplains. As reiterated earlier this year by a unanimous Supreme Court (*Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church and School v. EEOC*), churches have a right, grounded in the Religion Clauses of the Constitution, to decide, free from government interference, matters of church doctrine, polity and governance. A chaplain, though an officer, is first and foremost a religious leader who is endorsed by a particular faith group to preach and teach a particular faith. Chaplains have the unusual distinction of being the only constitutionally-compelled military specialty.

As the federal courts have recognized, failure to provide a chaplaincy in the Armed Forces would deprive service members of their right under the Religion Clauses to practice freely their chosen faith and not to have their religion inhibited by government. Thus, it is the obligation and right of chaplains to proclaim clearly and without restraint the teachings of their particular faith. To uphold this constitutional mandate, I believe it critical that the amendment be passed in order to ensure:

No restrictions or limitations will be placed on the teaching ability of any chaplain, whether in the pulpit, the classroom, the field, the barracks, private counseling sessions, or at the office.

No chaplain is ever disciplined for presenting authentic Catholic teaching on marriage and chaste living, which would include any preaching, teaching, counseling or other public or private

communication on the immorality, injustice, and/or unacceptability of homosexual behavior and same-sex unions.

No chaplain will ever be forced to participate in programs contrary to his or her faith. This latter point is especially important in light of the chapel-wide marriage preparatory programs such as "Strong Bonds" in the Army. In such programs, a chaplain, regardless of his/her faith, is required to provide marriage preparation and reinforcement for existing marriage to the whole of the base community. It should be made clear (and, so far, has not been made clear) that no Catholic priest/chaplain may be forced, as part of his routine chapel duties, to ensure "marriage preparation" for two persons of the same sex on a military base or participate in any marriage-related program for persons of the same sex.

2. The rights of Catholic service members. The legislation upholds the religious beliefs of Catholic service members by ensuring:

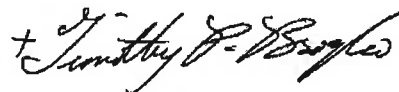
No service member will be reprimanded for presenting authentic Catholic teaching on marriage and chaste living, which would include any public or private communication on the immorality, injustice, and/or unacceptability of homosexual behavior and same-sex unions.

No money from the Catholic community will ever be used to further any matter contrary to Catholic doctrine, including the advancement of same-sex unions. As you are aware, in the Army and Air Force, a portion of the collection of each faith community is placed into the general chapel fund. It is from this fund that programs for marriage preparation are taken. It is of grave concern that a portion of Catholic monies, taken up at Mass, would be used to fund "marriage preparation" and "marriage reinforcement" for two persons of the same sex, a situation to which our faith is diametrically opposed.

This occasion is propitious to commend all Chaplains for their pastoral work. The challenges are manifold and the human need persists.

I thank you for your kind consideration of this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I might be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Timothy P. Broglio". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

(Most Rev.) Timothy P. Broglio

Archbishop for the Military Services, USA