



# TRADITIONAL VALUES COALITION

April 11, 2012

The Honorable Howard McKeon  
Chairman, House Armed Services Committee  
2184 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman McKeon,

**The Military Religious Freedom Protection Act (HR 3828)**, introduced by Rep. Tim Huelskamp (R-KS), upholds the religious liberties and rights of conscience of America's military chaplains and deserves the full bi-partisan support of our Congress.

I urge you in the strongest possible terms to support this common sense legislation.

To date, over 18 different denominations representing the vast majority of faith adherents -- Baptists, Catholics, Presbyterians, Anglicans, Assemblies of God, and evangelical churches -- and the thriving churches of America have announced their concerns about the current Defense Department regulations concerning military chaplains.

These restrictions on their rights include but are not limited to the right to preach from the pulpit according to the dictates of their faith, their ability to freely counsel and spiritually advise armed services personnel, and will force military chaplains to choose between their conscience and their military careers.

While formerly, the issue of homosexual marriages had been confined to a few states and barred by the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) by federal statute, the U.S. Navy Chief of Chaplains has issued new regulations dated May 1, 2011.

These new regulations will now permit the Obama Administration to openly defy federal law, crush the religious liberties of our nation's military chaplains, and continues to ignore the Defense of Marriage Act.

This poses two additional concerns for the rights of conscience and religious liberties of our U.S. military chaplains: (1) not only is this a flagrant violation of the Defense of Marriage Act and an overt attempt to undo the work of a duly elected Congress which passed the law, but (2) it places those U.S. military chaplains whose faith rejects homosexuality as gravely disordered in a vise, as refusing to perform such a ceremony could lead to charges of discrimination, court martial, and even discharge -- all for being forced to choose between faith and service.

It is equally important to keep in mind that this implementation allowing gays and ultimately transgenders to openly serve in the U.S. armed services was passed by a lame duck Congress, one whose vision and leadership were repudiated by the American people.

When the Defense Department originally “sold” this new Obama Administration policy to the Congress, it was assured the effort to allow gays and transgenders to serve would not threaten either the military readiness of our armed services, nor the rights of conscience and religious liberties of our chaplains. Nor would it be used as a tool for social experimentation. Nor would it affect military readiness. Nor would it be forced upon the military. Nor would any of the concerns raised by military chaplains go unheeded or unanswered.

These promises have been largely sidestepped. Or worse, they have been ignored.

It is important to remember the military chaplaincy is much older than the U.S. Constitution. The Second Continental Congress, at the request of then-General George Washington, specifically requested the military chaplaincy for the fledgling United States Army, a request granted on July 29, 1775. Washington introduced the chaplaincy into the United States Army as follows:

***The Hon. Continental Congress** having been pleased to allow a Chaplain to each Regiment, with the pay of Thirty-three Dollars and one third pr month--The Colonels or commanding officers of each regiment are directed to procure Chaplains accordingly; persons of good Characters and exemplary lives--To see that all inferior officers and soldiers pay them a suitable respect and attend carefully upon religious exercises. The blessing and protection of Heaven are at all times necessary but especially so in times of public distress and danger--The General hopes and trusts, that every officer and man, will endeavour so to live, and act, as becomes a Christian Soldier defending the dearest Rights and Liberties of his country.*

Since Washington’s order, federal courts have protected the military chaplaincy as constitutional under both the Free Exercise Clause and the Establishment Clause. To doubt the constitutionality and the rights of conscience enshrined in the military chaplaincy would be a total revocation of 237 years of mutual understanding and constitutional law.

**The Military Religious Freedom Protection Act (HR 3828) recognizes this fact.**

**Traditional Values Coalition on behalf of the 43,000 churches and ministries we represent strongly urges you to co-sponsor HR 3828** protecting the religious liberties and rights of conscience of America’s military chaplains.

Sincerely,



Andrea Lafferty  
President  
Traditional Values Coalition