

Congress Is Working to Undo This Obama Executive Order

This week, the House Armed Services Committee considered more amendments to the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017, otherwise known simply as the NDAA.

Among those amendments was one offered by U.S. Rep. Steve Russell (R-Okla.) that would allow faith-based contractors to provide services to the military without giving up their religious identity. An executive order issued by President Obama had prevented several from continuing to work with the armed forces because of their religious objections to homosexuality.

U.S. Army Col. Ron Crews (ret.), executive director of Chaplain Alliance for Religious Liberty, applauded the committee's vote. In an official statement, he said the services provided by religious organizations that have contracted with the government include caring for refugees, chaplaincy assistance for the military, housing and care for homeless veterans, drug prevention programs for youth, comprehensive medical assistance, substance abuse rehabilitation, ministries to prison inmates, and support for service members and their families.

"Vendors should be allowed to continue to serve our men and women in uniform without having to give up their religious identity," he said. "Several organizations that have provided significant services to the military have been told that they no longer qualify as vendors because of the president's executive order concerning sexual orientation and gender identity. These vendors will serve without discriminating against anyone, so they shouldn't be discriminated against by the government."

The bill will eventually go to the full House for consideration, probably in the fall, and would also have to be adopted by the Senate before it goes to President Obama for his signature. An amendment in either chamber, with just a simple majority, could strike Russell's language from the bill.

The federal government's 2017 fiscal year begins Oct. 1.