

No Atheist Chaplains Allowed, Says Religious Freedom Amendment

Wednesday, on a 33-26 vote, the House Armed Services Committee approved a religious freedom amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). The amendment, authored by U.S. Rep. John Fleming, R-La., protects the right of service members not only to hold religious beliefs but to act on them and freely practice those beliefs.

The committee adopted the amendment to address the growing religious hostility within the military. On April 23, religious liberty concerns were heightened even further after anti-Christian activist Mikey Weinstein met with senior Air Force officials at the Pentagon and pressed for the court-martialing of Christian service members who share their faith.

"I commend the House Armed Services Committee for taking decisive action to protect the right of service members to freely practice and express their faith," Family Research Council President Tony Perkins says. "Congress acted appropriately after investigating numerous incidents involving service members who have had their careers threatened simply for practicing their faith in a real and tangible way.

"The **religious liberty** violations have grown more frequent in recent months, including a report yesterday that an Army master sergeant has been reprimanded for serving Chick-fil-A sandwiches at his promotion ceremony. A rear admiral also recently recounted how he defied military regulations by giving a Bible to a soldier who had attempted suicide.

"More than 167,000 Americans have signed our petition calling on Defense Secretary Hagel to enact a DoD-wide policy protecting the right of service members to practice their

faith. Secretary Hagel has not adequately responded to the concerns of service members, the public and Congress.

“Instead, the Pentagon, under the secretary’s leadership, has continued to comply with the demands of anti-Christian activist Mikey Weinstein. The chilling effect of this religious suppression has reached every branch of the military, particularly the Air Force, which is why this congressional action is so urgently needed,” Perkins concludes.