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## Chaplains to DoD: Allow Catholic service members to worship

**WASHINGTON** — The Chaplain Alliance for Religious Liberty is calling on Department of Defense leaders to fulfill their obligation to ensure that all service members have the opportunity to exercise their religious liberties while in uniform.

“Every American, including those who wear the uniform, should be allowed to exercise their God-given and constitutionally protected religious liberties regardless of whether portions of the federal government are open or closed,” said Chaplain (COL) Ron Crews, USAR, Retired. “For that reason, we fully support the Archdiocese for Military Services in their call to allow contract priests to conduct religious services on military installations where no active-duty Catholic chaplains are assigned.”

In a [statement](#) released Friday, General Counsel of the Archdiocese for the Military Services John Schlageter wrote, “The temporary solution to this shortage is to provide GS and contract priests.... With the government shutdown, many GS and contract priests who minister to Catholics on military bases worldwide are not permitted to work--not even to volunteer. During the shutdown, it is illegal for them to minister on base and they risk being arrested if they attempt to do so.... At a time when the military is considering alternative sources of funding for sporting events at the service academies, no one seems to be looking for funding to ensure the Free Exercise rights of Catholics in uniform. Why not?”

The U.S. House of Representatives, in a special session Saturday, passed House Resolution 58, which expresses the will of the House to allow Department of Defense funds to be used for contract religious workers.

“We commend the House for this resolution to ensure that our Catholic brothers and sisters have access to Mass and the priests who faithfully serve them,” Crews said. “This need was made clear when even the priest who normally leads Mass for military personnel assigned to Camp David was denied entry last Sunday. No good reason exists for this type of problem to continue.”

***The Chaplain Alliance for Religious Liberty is an organization of chaplain endorsers, the faith groups that provide chaplains for the U.S. military and other agencies needing chaplains. The endorsers in the Chaplain Alliance speak for more than 2,000 chaplains serving the armed forces.***

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