

Veteran chaplains, service members urge Boehner, Reid to stand up for religious freedom

***Officials representing thousands of chaplains ask Congress
to protect religious liberty in wake of DADT repeal***

WASHINGTON, D.C. — A group of veteran service members—primarily chaplains—who, on behalf of their faith groups, represent thousands of currently-serving military chaplains and several million Americans, sent a [letter](#) to the U.S. Congress Wednesday, asking key officials to protect military religious liberty from the dangers created by the government’s decision to force open homosexual behavior on the U.S. armed forces through the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” next month.

The letter notes that “[o]ur nation has a robust history of protecting military religious liberty,” and that, in fact, “[t]he whole reason that the chaplaincy corps exists is to fulfill the constitutional imperative of protecting service members’ rights to freedom of religion.” But, it says, even Obama administration officials admit that current religious liberty protections create “boundaries that are not always clearly defined,” and this lack of definition in the post-DADT military will lead to confusion and censorship. That, the letter concludes, is intolerable because “[n]o Americans, and especially not those in our armed forces, should be forced to abandon their religious beliefs.”

Thus, the nearly two dozen veteran service member signatories request in the letter that Speaker of the House John Boehner and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid to ensure that there is “a clear, unmistakable perimeter around religious liberty.” The signatories represent more than 2,000 currently serving military chaplains and millions of faith-group constituents.

“Chaplains and service members have told us they are very concerned they will be marginalized and even punished for being faithful to their religious beliefs in the wake of the repeal. We share those concerns,” the letter states. “In fact, some chaplains have already personally experienced the punitive atmosphere this repeal has generated.”

Chaplains represented through the letter serve the religious liberty needs of the military, performing spiritual and moral services for hundreds of thousands of service members who share their faith and providing for the needs of those who do not. Among these chaplains are those who have served in armed conflict in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Bosnia, Vietnam, Korea, and World War II, who have also comforted the victims of the 9/11 and USS Cole terrorist attacks, and who have been wounded in the service of their nation.

Several of the signatories are members of the newly-formed group, Chaplain Alliance for Religious Liberty. Chaplain Alliance is comprised of veteran service members, primarily chaplains, who are working to ensure that all chaplains, and those whom they serve, are able to freely exercise their God-given and constitutionally protected religious liberties without fear of reprisal.