

May 23, 2011

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Chief of Chaplains, U.S. Air Force
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Washington, DC 20330

Chaplain Mark L. Tidd, Rear Admiral
Chief of Chaplains, U.S. Navy
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Washington, DC 20370

Dear Chiefs,

Thank you for your service to our country and our chaplains at this critical time in our nation's history. We, the undersigned endorsing agents, represent faith groups that have tens of millions of members and who endorse over a thousand military chaplains to provide for the spiritual and moral needs of both the hundreds of thousands of service members who share our faith and those who do not. We know that you are collectively facing many difficult decisions, especially in light of the repeal of DADT. Because these decisions have such potentially far-reaching consequences, both intended and unintended, we desire to make our concerns known to you in light of the recently published Navy Chief of Chaplains revised directive regarding the use of base chapels for same-sex unions and the recent memo of suspension. We have been informed that the Navy's action was based on legal advice from DoD that was also provided to the other Chief of Chaplains' offices.

In January 2011, the intent of the repeal of DADT was explained to the entire endorsing community as being to remove the prohibition on homosexual behavior for those in military service. It is our strong belief that the letter of revision as released by Chaplain (RADM) Tidd's office goes beyond this stated intent of DADT repeal by sanctioning and normalizing the use of base chapels for same-sex unions. Though this revision is now temporarily suspended pending further review, we are genuinely concerned that this might be a sign of things to come. We are likewise concerned that endorsers and faith communities had no voice in the formulation of such a significant policy change.

DOMA remains the law of the land. There is no clear reason why it does not apply to Federal military facilities, particularly base chapels. We were not privy to the legal advice that your offices received, nor have we received any satisfactory explanation for why DOMA is not fully applicable to federal facility use. Since the current

administration has publicly stated that it will no longer support and defend DOMA, this action has every appearance of selective disregard for the law and raises significant concerns. Issues which were heretofore clear have now become unnecessarily clouded.

Of equally grave concern is the fact that chaplains are instructors of conscience. Chaplains have a tremendous moral responsibility to insure that when they preach, teach or counsel, they do so in accordance with their conscience and in harmony with the faith group by which they are endorsed. When guidance, however, is forthcoming from senior leadership that implies protected status for those who engage in homosexual behavior and normalizes same-sex unions in base chapels, any outside observer would conclude that both homosexuality and homosexual unions officiated as marriages in base chapels are normative. This creates an environment that is increasingly hostile to the many chaplains—and the service members they serve—whose faith groups and personal consciences recognize homosexual behavior as immoral and unsafe and do not permit same-sex unions.


For this reason, and particularly in light of the growing confusion regarding how DADT repeal will play out—indeed, we were told that issues like same-sex weddings were not a concern because of DOMA just months ago—we strongly encourage the adoption of broad, clear, and strong protections for conscience. No American, especially those serving in the armed forces, should be forced to abandon their religious beliefs or be marginalized for holding to those beliefs. It is not sufficient to posit, as the CRWG report did, that chaplains and service members remain free to exercise their faith in chapel services. Service members should know that chaplains' ministry and their own rights of conscience remain protected everywhere military necessity has placed them. We hope that you will join us in urging DoD and Congress to adopt such specific and intentional conscience protections.

We fervently pray that you stand strong in support of the laws of the land and that God would grant you His wisdom for sound moral guidance for the future health and prosperity of the entire chaplain body. In the spirit of *cooperation without compromise*, let us work together, for the good of all, seeking God's wisdom and guidance for all our brave men and women in uniform.

For God and Country.



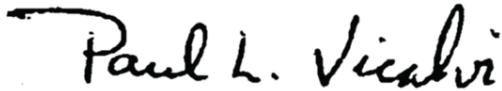
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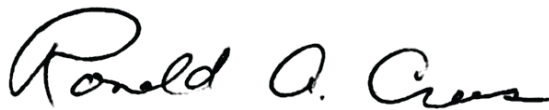
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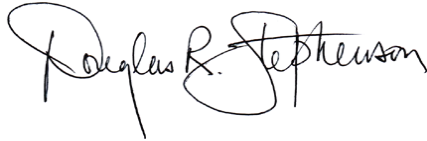
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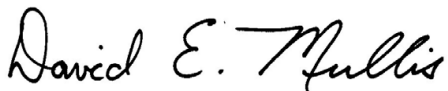
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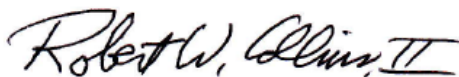
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