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**CHAPLAIN ALLIANCE FOR RELIGIOUS LIBERTY**

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## **Congress comes to defense of Chaplain Wes Modder**

***Decorated chaplain who served with Navy SEALs faces investigation for following his faith***

**WASHINGTON** – Thirty-five members of the House of Representatives wrote to the Secretary of the Navy and Chief of Chaplains Monday to defend the rights of Chaplain Wes Modder, wrongfully dismissed for ministering consistent with his faith.

“The military should not ignore the First Amendment freedoms of service members – the very freedoms they enlisted to defend,” said Chaplain (COL) Ron Crews, retired Army chaplain and executive director of the Chaplain Alliance for Religious Liberty. “The Navy’s conduct in this case is not only damaging to Chaplain Modder. Its decision to discipline him has a chilling effect on chaplains all across the Navy and the other services. I commend this group of Congressmen for standing up for the basic rights of military chaplains.”

Lt. Cmdr. Chaplain Modder was “detached for cause” by his command after a complaint about how he ministered in private counseling concerning sex. His ministry was wholly consistent with the positions of his endorsing church, the Assemblies of God, on that issue. As the members of Congress note in their letter, “Navy policy...protects a chaplain’s ability to preach and teach consistent with the tenets of his or her endorsing denomination, even when Sailors may disagree with the chaplain’s remarks....”

In their [letter](#), the Congressmen also remind the Secretary Of Defense and the Chief of Chaplains that Congress passed conscience protections in the National Defense Authorization Act. The letter also reiterates that the Department of Defense has taken the necessary steps to implement that through two instructions.

“It is very clear that Chaplain Modder was well within his rights and, in fact, acting as a good chaplain,” said Crews. “I am hopeful that the Navy will not only reinstate Chaplain Modder immediately but also take the necessary steps to prevent this unfortunate incident from forcing other chaplains to silence themselves contrary to their conscience to avoid command discipline.”

In Chaplain Modder’s 19-year career with the Navy, he has earned high marks from his commanders. He has been called the “best of the best,” a “consummate professional leader,” and a “national asset, mission-critical, mission-essential officer to any command.” He stands to lose his retirement benefits from an adverse outcome in the Navy’s investigation of his ministry.

In addition, Chaplain Modder’s command has gone so far as to issue a “no contact” order, banning him from his base on the day a memorial service was held for one of his fallen sailors.

“This decorated officer and chaplain has been subjected to unjust humiliation in a very public way,” Crews added. “It is time for the Secretary of the Navy to step in and end this travesty.”

***[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 2,600 chaplains serving the armed forces.***

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