

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 13, 2013

The Honorable Charles Hagel
Secretary of Defense
Office of the Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Hagel,

Religious freedom is an integral component of America's greatness and has been a vital pillar of our nation from the very beginning. As you noted during the House Armed Services Committee Hearing on April 11, 2013, the protection of religious freedom is fundamental to our country. Congress recognized this fact when it included religious conscience protections for our servicemembers in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

The conscience protections which Congress included in section 533 of the National Defense Authorization Act provided specific religious freedom protections for servicemembers generally and chaplains specifically. The provisions require the Armed Forces to accommodate servicemembers' moral and religious convictions, as long as they do not "threaten good order and discipline." The language also prohibits the military from using an individual's beliefs as the basis for adverse personnel action and ensures that chaplains will not be forced "to perform any rite, ritual, or ceremony that is contrary to [their] conscience, moral principles, or religious beliefs."

Upon signing the NDAA into law, President Obama said the conscience protections were "unnecessary and ill-advised." This statement, coupled with recent events, raises concerns that the military is developing a culture that is hostile to religion. A recently revealed power point presentation used in equal opportunity training to an Army reserve unit in Pennsylvania included evangelical Christians, Catholics, Mormons, Sunni Muslims, and some Jews on a list of religious extremist groups alongside groups like Al Qaeda and Hamas. A memo regarding visitation policies at Walter Reed issued in December 2011 prohibited visitors from bringing Bibles and other religious materials on the premises. A particularly concerning memorandum issued on September 1, 2011, General Norton A. Schwartz prohibited commanders from notifying Airmen about Chaplain Corps programs, stating that only Air Force chaplains are trained to provide leadership on religious matters.

As you acknowledged, these assaults should not be happening. Congress deliberately included religious freedom protections in the NDAA to address this growing pattern of hostility and to protect the constitutionally guaranteed right of religious freedom for our servicemembers and chaplains.

Under section 533, you have been tasked with implementing regulations that carry out the conscience protections passed by Congress. In your testimony you indicated that, you "will comply with all the NDAA directives." As Members of Congress who voted for the inclusion of these protections in the defense policy bill, we are deeply concerned that the Department of

Defense may have consulted with the Military Religious Freedom Foundation, an organization that is focused on silencing religious freedom in the military, regarding policies affecting these religious freedom rights of our nation's servicemembers.

We request the names of all organizations you are consulting in drafting regulations to comply with the NDAA and the date by which you expect to have the regulations protecting conscience protections, as called for under the law, finalized and implemented.

We appreciate your expressed commitment to addressing this matter. Your leadership as Secretary of Defense is vital to protecting religious liberty in our military. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

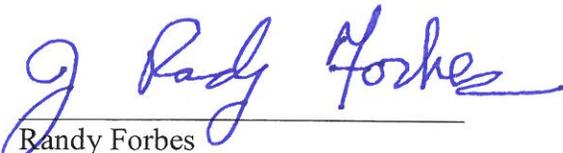
Sincerely,



Doug Lamborn
Member of Congress



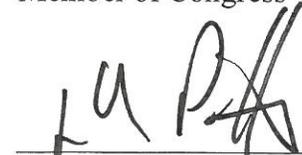
Steve Scalise
Member of Congress



Randy Forbes
Member of Congress



John Fleming
Member of Congress



Joe Pitts
Member of Congress



Trent Franks
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Jim Jordan
Member of Congress



Frank Wolf
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Diane Black
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Jack Kingston
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Scott Garret
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Dan Lipinski
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Stephen Fincher
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Randy Neugebauer
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Susan Brooks
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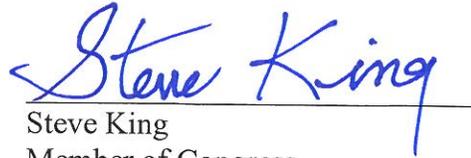
Steve Chabot
Member of Congress



Robert Alderholt
Member of Congress



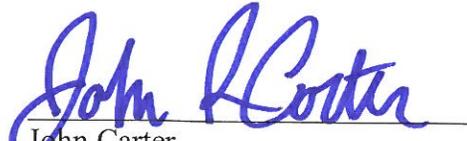
Kevin Kramer
Member of Congress



Steve King
Member of Congress



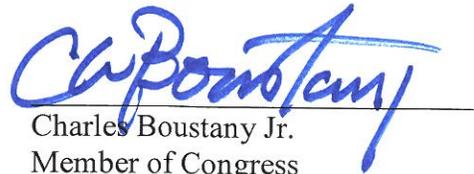
Vicky Hartzler
Member of Congress



John Carter
Member of Congress



Tim Griffin
Member of Congress



Charles Boustany Jr.
Member of Congress



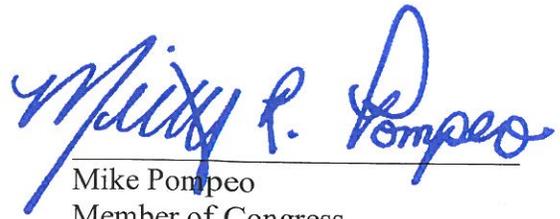
Robert Wittman
Member of Congress



Matt Salmon
Member of Congress



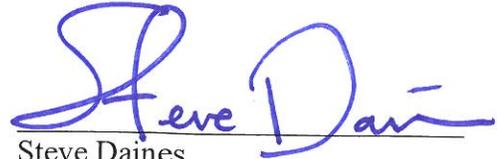
Steven Palazzo
Member of Congress



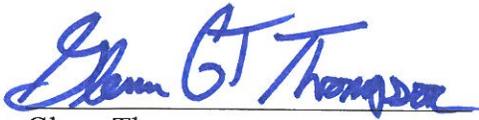
Mike Pompeo
Member of Congress



Kevin Brady
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Steve Daines
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Glenn Thompson
Member of Congress



Austin Scott
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Luke Messer
Member of Congress



Charles Fleischmann
Member of Congress



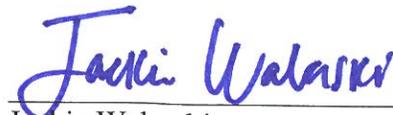
Rob Bishop
Member of Congress



James Lankford
Member of Congress



Pete Olson
Member of Congress



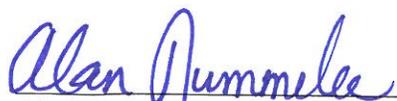
Jackie Walorski
Member of Congress



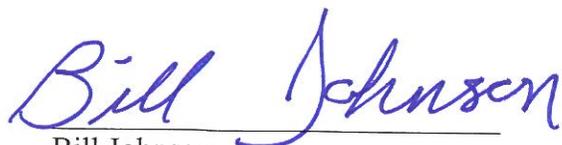
Todd Rokita
Member of Congress



Chris Stewart
Member of Congress



Alan Nunnelee
Member of Congress



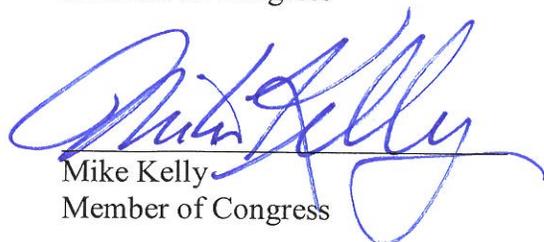
Bill Johnson
Member of Congress



Mo Brooks
Member of Congress



Andy Harris
Member of Congress



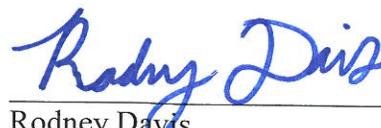
Mike Kelly
Member of Congress



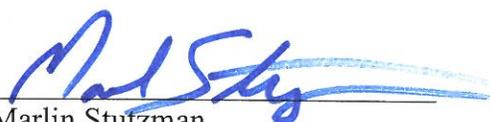
Mark Meadows
Member of Congress



Markwayne Mullin
Member of Congress



Rodney Davis
Member of Congress



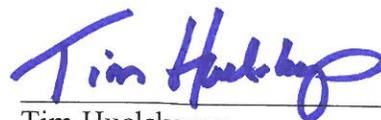
Marlin Stutzman
Member of Congress



Bill Huizenga
Member of Congress



Jim Bridenstine
Member of Congress



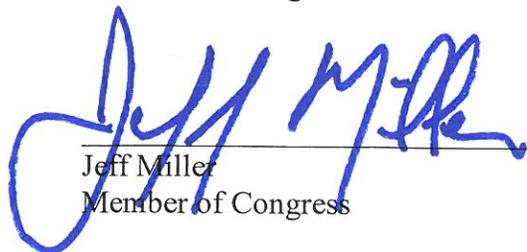
Tim Huelskamp
Member of Congress



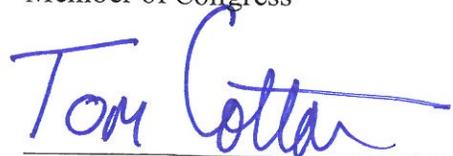
Doug LaMalfa
Member of Congress



Robert Pittenger
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Jeff Miller
Member of Congress



Tom Cotton
Member of Congress

Walter B. Jones

Walter Jones
Member of Congress

Lynn A. Westmoreland

Lynn Westmoreland
Member of Congress

Michelle Bachmann

Michelle Bachman
Member of Congress

Paul C. Broun

Paul Broun
Member of Congress

Louie Gohmert

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Tim Walberg
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Jeb Hensarling

Jeb Hensarling
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Stevan Pearce

Stevan Pearce
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Ralph M. Hall

Ralph Hall
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John Culberson

John Culberson
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Gus Bilirakis

Gus Bilirakis
Member of Congress

Joe Wilson

Joe Wilson
Member of Congress

Joe Barton

Joe Barton
Member of Congress

Mike McIntyre

Mike McIntyre
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