

**Subject: I am lodging a formal complaint regarding Dallas VA
Veteran Canteen Service Inbox**

Date: July 18, 2019 at 9:00:59 AM MDT

To: Mikey Weinstein <mikey@militaryreligiousfreedom.org>

To: Military Religious Freedom Foundation

Attention: Michael (Mikey) Weinstein, Founder/President

Dear Mr. Weinstein,

I am a US Army veteran. I am writing for help on behalf of myself and a number of other veterans who are also patients at the Dallas VA Medical Center. I served for 5 years and was honorably discharged. While I was in service and even after my Expiration of Term of Service, I took religious belief, or lack thereof, to be a personal matter and in particular one that should not be touted for or against in any way by the US Government or their affiliate operations. I admit I am an atheist but was once a Fundamentalist Christian and was also a minister for 5 years of my 23 years in the Christian Faith and even took Christian Theology and Apologetics Courses from Liberty University. I don't hate religious people and I don't always favor atheists just for being atheists. I accept people based on their character (if they are in control of it) and their

behavior toward others. I am setting this as my point of concern as I, and the other veterans on behalf of whom I am writing, find it less than patriotic for the Veteran's Canteen Service Patriot Store, housed within the Dallas VA Medical Center, to display such overt religious propaganda and in such abundance. One picture displayed the words "One Nation under God...since 1776" ...along with a verse from the Bible underneath it. Any unbiased and independent research into this claim of America being a Christian Nation (based upon the Bible) is patently not true. America is a Secular Nation ensuring freedom of religion and freedom from religion and that it's based not upon the Abrahamic faith(s) but upon Greco-Roman concepts of Democracy and especially upon the principles extolled by the bright and independent thinking of those that spurned the Age of Enlightenment.

If America were based on the Christian religion, then I intuit that it would not allow much religious freedom at all as it would be violating the First Amendment to allow others to believe differently than them (whatever sect gained power over the other sects) and the Mosaic First Commandment goes against the principle of freedom of conscience. Nobody is commanded to believe to be an American and any language that says so is untrue as one can be a believer or non-believer and still be an American and religion or none alone makes a person a patriot. It is obvious that our Founding Fathers wrote the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and the Bill of Rights leaving out Christian religious language. No amount of Right-Wing Religious Propaganda Revisionist History will be able to erase these facts unless they do so by great force and it does concern me that the U.S. government is being operated by many with this type of sectarian persuasion and often they are loud and proud about it and are tolerated by some of their constituents. This runs counter to the writings of Founding Fathers such as Thomas Jefferson, the primary author of the U.S. Constitution, who wrote the following in correspondence with the Danbury Baptist Association, "Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God, that

he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, & not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should "make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof," thus building a wall of separation between Church & State. Adhering to this expression of the supreme will of the nation in behalf of the rights of conscience, I shall see with sincere satisfaction the progress of those sentiments which tend to restore to man all his natural rights, convinced he has no natural right in opposition to his social duties." (Jefferson, 1802)

John Adams's confirms America's secular foundation in The Treaty of Tripoli stating that America is not based upon the Christian religion (Adams, 1796). I am concerned about this hard turn to Right Wing Christian Nationalism and it does not represent in any way the inclusive melting pot of American society. Getting back to how this disturbed me to see such an overt favoritism of a specific religious worldview by the Veterans Administration shocked me. I wanted to say something but thought it a waste of time and would I didn't want to make a scene and be of no benefit. But I can't shake this frustration. If Freethinker, Muslim, Jewish, Native American, Sikh, Buddhist, Satanist, Hindu wanted to have their material as well displayed it would be met with anger by the majority of Veterans. and with good reason(delete). The fact that this is tolerated is something I find disturbing. America isn't a monolithic society, we are after all a nation of diversity. The original motto E Pluribus Unum (which was removed from our money in response to the Red Scare) better represents America as it means "Out of many, one" than does "In God We Trust" which excludes those of a non-religious persuasion. The US Military Armed Forces comes from this diversity and should express tolerance but also a great deal of class and protocol should be expected from those within it and the VA Hospital System. If they promote Christian memorabilia then all other religions should also be given fair and equal representation. However, I think it is clear

