

THE INSTITUTE

on Religion
& Public Policy



General Mark A. Welsh III
Chief of Staff
United States Air Force
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1670

Dear General Welsh,

I write on behalf of THE INSTITUTE on Religion and Public Policy to offer our support for the language of Air Force Instruction 1-1 recommended by the Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF). The INSTITUTE agrees with MRFF's advocacy for separation of church and state in the military and supports further advancement of that language.

The INSTITUTE does not support the concept that a military officer can force his or her religious beliefs onto others. Therefore, a new policy, if adopted by the United States Air Force, will be a direct violation of the Constitutionally-protected right of members of our nation's military to exercise their right to religious freedom.

Additionally, if commanders and supervisors are able to promote their personal religious beliefs uninhibited, it will allow them to extend preferential treatment to those who follow the same religion and discriminate against those who do not. This can cause members to doubt their commanders' impartiality and objectivity, which can potentially result in the "degradation on the unit's morale, good order, and discipline." This new policy will also discourage military members from filing complaints if they feel discriminated against out of fear that their complaints will be considered "hypothetical" and "not real."

This new policy can be very detrimental if adopted by the Air Force. THE INSTITUTE calls attention to the negative consequences that will result if this policy is implemented in the military, especially with regard to the right to religious expression. The military should continue to advocate for the separation of church and state in order to avoid preferential treatment, discrimination, and ensure religious tolerance.

With cordial personal regards and best wishes, I am,

Sincerely yours,


Joseph K. Grieboski
Founder and Chairman of the Board