Wednesday Evening, July 2, 2020

LANDMARK MRFF VICTORY!



INCENSING 20 FUNDAMENTALIST CHRISTIAN GOP U.S. CONGRESS MEMBERS! Is hell freezing over? The U.S. Army just backed the recent successes of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation' (MRFF) in defiance of

Republican members of Congress!

aggressive complaints from twenty fundamentalist Christian

FAITH & SERVICE
DOD PRESSED ON RESTRICTIONS FOR SERVICE MEMBER WORSHIP @NIGHT Watch Congressman Doug Collins (R-GA) refer to Mikey as "Mickey" Weinstein at the 3:50 mark. GOP Congressman Doug Collins Appears on Fox News @Night w/ Shannon Bream Complaining About "Mickey" Weinstein Last Evening 7/1/20

MRFF OP-ED ON DAILY KOS On Daily Kos Recommended List

GOP Congress Members Incensed Over the Army Standing Behind Decisions in Favor of MRFF By: Chris Rodda, MRFF Senior Research Director

Wednesday, July 2, 2020

fundamentalist Christian Republican members of Congress! On May 14, Rep. Doug Collins (R-GA) and nineteen other fundamentalist

string of victories for MRFF in protecting the rights of our service members

to be free from unwanted proselytizing by those of their ilk, wrote a letter to Secretary of Defense Mark Esper, attacking MRFF. [...] that they were "frustrated" that Army commanders were agreeing with MRFF, saying, "This must end." [...]

In the second to last paragraph of the letter, the Congress members expressed

The Army's response was that the Army is supporting the decisions of the commanders in favor of MRFF's demands: "In all cases outlined in your letter, the commands that received a complaint sought assistance from their higher headquarters and the Army staff. In response to inquiries, the Army provided guidance to ensure chaplains and

(Excerpts from Collins-Lamborn Letter below/Emphasis Added by MRFF) "...we are discouraged to learn that the Army is not only standing behind the decisions of commands that have restricted the religious liberty of their

chaplains and servicemembers, but the Army and the Department of

Foundation (MRFF) and Mikey Weinstein "

Today's press release from Reps. Collins and Lamborn announces a new

Click to Read Full Op-Ed

Congressmen Collins' and Lamborn's Letter of Frustration to Defense Secretary Mark Esper

Over U.S. Army Agreeing with MRFF

Defense (DoD) are also supporting these actions and guiding commands' responses t o the aggressive demands of the Military Religious Freedom

letter they have sent to Secretary Esper, dated July 1 [...]

Defense for Personnel and Readiness Matthew Donovan on June 12, 2020, that signaled receptiveness to our concerns regarding the DoD's handling of the barrage of anti-faith claims made against chaplains by Mikey Weinstein and his organization, the MRFF. " [...]

Congress of the United States Mashington, DC 20515 July 1, 2020 The Honorable Mark T. Esper Secretary of Defense 1000 Defense Pentagon Washington, D.C. 20301 Dear Secretary Esper, While we appreciate the Army's response to our letter dated May 14, 2020, we are discouraged to learn that the Army is not only standing behind the decisions of commands that have restricted the religious liberty of their chaplains and servicemembers, but the Army and the Department of Defense (DoD) are also supporting these actions and guiding commands' responses to the aggressive demands of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF) and Mikey

Weinstein. The mixed messages we have received from DoD officials over the past month and the Navy's recent order that seeks to keep servicemembers and chaplains from worshipping

Click to Enlarge Congressmen Collins' and Lamborn's Letter of Frustration to Defense Secretary Mark Esper 7/2/20 Press Release from GOP Congressman Collins (R-GA) Condemning MRFF's Victories: COLLINS, LAMBORN BLAST ESPER FOR FAILING TO PROTECT RELIGIOUS LIBERTY JUL 2, 2020 | PRESS RELEASE "Given the years-long record of the DoD's actions in contradiction with Federal law protecting religious liberty, it is clear to us that the DoD has either willfully ignored or is unaware of its obligations to protect the religious freedom of its servicemembers." WASHINGTON — Reps. Doug Collins (R-Ga.) and Doug Lamborn (R-Colo.) sent a letter to Secretary of Defense Mark Esper blasting the Department of Defense for failing to protect the religious liberty of our servicemembers. "Given the years-long record of the DoD's actions in contradiction with Federal law protecting religious liberty, it is clear to us that the DoD has either willfully ignored or is unaware of its obligations to protect the religious freedom of its servicemembers," they wrote. In their letter, Collins and Lamborn also called out the Navy's recent order prohibiting servicemembers and chaplains from attending off-base religious services indoors while allowing social gatherings of any size. "While we can all agree that the health and safety of our troops is critical during the ongoing public health crisis, singling out religious gatherings while allowing other activities and unrestricted social gatherings to take place is unlawful. To enforce that prohibition under threat of court-martial is unconscionable and

the religious freedom protections the Religious Freedom Restoration Act affords. We will continue to update and enhance training, as we publish revised policy. The Army is held religious services, and outreach to Soldiers and their Families are available. As you may know, due to the COVID pandemic we transitioned to using social media as one of the primary mediums to conduct religious support activities, while continuing to strike the appropriate balance between the Free Exercise Clause and the Establishment Clause. Our commanders, in consultation with their unit ministry teams and servicing legal offices, continue to uphold the rights of Soldiers, consistent with all In all cases outlined in your letter, the commands that received a complaint sought assistance from their higher headquarters and the Army staff. In response to inquiries, the Army provided guidance to ensure chaplains and commands are able to continue to

use social media for religious support activities in compliance with applicable laws and

We continue to strive to provide our Army family with the support services they need during these unique times. Thank you for your letter and your continued support of our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Families, and Civilians.

Click to Enlarge Letter Behalf of Defense Sec. Esper, Responding to the 20 Fundamentlist Christian Congress Members

BACKGROUND:

Letter to Secretary of Defense Esper Complaining of MRFF's String of Recent Victories

Click to read MRFF Senior Research Director Chris Rodda's 5/14/20 Op-Ed: 20 Members of Congress Recognize the Impact of MRFF's Work

Click to read 5/14/20 letter from GOP Rep. Doug Collins and 19 other GOP Congress Member to Secretary of Defense Esper

"Next Steps Walla Walla SS Tattoo"

MRFF'S

INBOX

E. Casey Wardynski

Sec. 31. THE THE STATE OF

Walla Police Department to stand against having a police officer with an SS tattoo in a visible place on his body. I've written a letter to the city council and I've connected with other who feel the same. My friends and I would like to help in any way we can. A group of us have reached out to Small through common connections to see if he would meet with us and allow us to give him some perspective on why we are protesting. Honestly doubt he will bite. I'm also thinking about gathering signatures from my friends who were afraid to show at the rally due to the color of their skin and their professional status in the community. Is there anything else we should do? Thanks again for intervening in this issue. Many of us feel powerless and afraid in the face of this revelation about WWPD and their response. Having you on our side has given us a sense of hope in this situation.

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MRFF Information/Contact:

Is hell freezing over? The U.S. Army just backed the recent successes of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation' (MRFF) in defiance of aggressive complaints from twenty Christian members of the House of Representatives, chagrined over a recent

commands are able to continue to use social media for religious support activities in compliance with applicable laws and policy."

[...] "We were encouraged following a conversation with Undersecretary of

indoors while continuing to allow other gatherings signals a pervasive and dangerous misapplication and misunderstanding of Federal law Given the years-long record of the DoD's actions in contradiction with Federal law protecting religious liberty, it is clear to us that the DoD has either willfully ignored or is unaware of its obligations to protect the religious freedom of its servicemembers. Despite the several letters members of Congress, legal organizations, and faith groups have sent the DoD explaining its obligations, we continue to witness failures to correctly apply Federal law protecting the religious freedom of our brave men and women in the military. In fact, in the Army's letter postmarked June 11, 2020, we were told that the Army has "developed and implemented comprehensive policies and training concerning religious freedom." If that is true, why do we continue to hear from members of the military legal and chaplain communities that no such training exists? To further highlight the scope of the DoD's fundamental misunderstanding of Federal protections concerning religious liberty, the Navy recently issued an order prohibiting servicemembers and chaplains from attending off-base religious services indoors while allowing

social gatherings of any size. While we can all agree that the health and safety of our troops is critical during the ongoing public health crisis, singling out religious gatherings while allowing other activities and unrestricted social gatherings to take place is unlawful. To enforce that prohibition under threat of court-martial is $\underline{\mathbf{unconscionable}}$ and provides yet another example of

why change is sorely needed at the Pentagon.

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On May 14, 2020, Collins, Lamborn, and a number of their colleagues sent a

On June 11, 2020, the Army responded by standing behind the decisions of commands that have restricted the religious liberty of their chaplains and

[Collins/Lamborn Letter to Defense Sec. Mark Esper is now directly above press release as formatted by MRFF]

Letter From Department of the Army, on Behalf of

Esper, Responding to the 20 Congress Members:

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

JUN 1 1 2020

I have been asked to respond on behalf of Secretary of Defense Mark T. Esper to your May 14, 2020 letter concerning the religious freedoms of Service members. We take the concerns you raise seriously, and we recognize the value of the religious support that chaplains provide to Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, their Families, and Department Civilians, especially during these unprecedented times.

Both Department of Defense and Department of the Army policy support the rights of Service members to observe the tenets of their respective religion, or to observe no religion at all. We have developed and implemented comprehensive policies and training concerning religious freedom. Within the Army, we anticipate publishing a revision of Army Regulation 600-20 in the near future to place a greater emphasis on

letter to Secretary Esper urging him to protect the religious liberty of our servicemen and women as commands across the globe were giving in to

baseless demands from anti-faith outside groups.

Read the full letter by clicking here or below.

The Honorable Doug Collins U.S. House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515 Dear Representative Collins:

policy.

Hey Mikey,

(name withheld)

Pentagon."

servicemembers.

My name is (name withheld), I was at the protest last Wednesday at the Walla

, amazonsmile

SUPPORT MRFF! Your Generous Support Allows us to Continue our



Join MRFF's Constitution Society (Recurring Donation)

Help Build the Wall: Donate a "Brick"!