



MILITARY RELIGIOUS FREEDOM
f o u n d a t i o n

SENATE ATTEMPT TO UNDERMINE MILITARY RELIGIOUS FREEDOM FAILS; MRFF'S FIGHT AGAINST TRUMP DoD's REGULATION CHANGES CONTINUES

The Good News: The Republican Senate's attempt to amend the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) with a section mandating military training on how to force religion on others failed.

The Bad News: Using the same deceptively named "Religious Freedom Restoration Act" (RFRA) that was the basis of the Senate's failed NDAA amendment, a core religion regulation was rewritten by a Trump Defense Department appointee to allow all manner of previously prohibited and unconstitutional religious behavior.

MRFF is geared up to fight back against the disastrous Trumpian regulation changes under a new administration in 2021.



MRFF OP-ED ON DAILY KOS

#2 Trending story on Daily Kos

Senate Attempt to Mandate Military Training on How to Force Religion on Others Fails

By: MRFF Senior Research Director Chris Rodda

Tuesday, January 5, 2021

(Excerpts from Daily Kos/Emphasis Added by MRFF)



After making good on his Twitter threats to veto the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) — first over renaming military bases named for Confederates, then over his demand that this bill repeal Section 230 (the completely unrelated law making social media platforms not liable for content posted by users), then over something or other to do with China — **our soon-to-be-former-president's NDAA veto was overridden by Congress**, and this annual military bill, which most people have never paid any attention to before, became law on New Year's Day.

The NDAA, the annual military funding and policy bill, is also **the bill where fundamentalist Christian members of Congress typically try to sneak in provisions that subvert the First Amendment's guarantee of religious freedom for our troops**, and this year was no exception. Fortunately, the effort failed to make it into the final bill.

As I wrote back in July, a particularly crafty section, which mandated so-called "religious accommodation" training, was introduced in the Senate's version of the NDAA. **The only "accommodation" this training would have provided, however, was the accommodation of unconstitutional proselytizing by Christian zealots in our military.**

The introduction of this section came after **Senator Ted Cruz** — the same Senator Ted Cruz who is now among the traitorous Trump sycophant senators poised to object to Congress's certification of Joe Biden's election — wrote a letter to now-deposed Secretary of Defense Mark Esper decrying the **success of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF)** in protecting the fundamental right of our men and women in uniform to be free from unwanted religious proselytizing.

What all of this revolves around is a law called the "Religious Freedom Restoration Act" (RFRA). From the name of this law, it sounds like a good thing, right? Well, it isn't, as advocates of real religious freedom like MRFF well know. In recent years, **this 1993 act has become the go-to law for fundamentalist Christian legal organizations in their defense of completely unconstitutional promotions of religion** in the civilian sphere, and now it is becoming the go-to law for defending unconstitutional religious proselytizing in the military.

[...]

The good news and the bad news

The failure of the Senate's RFRA training NDAA amendment was the good news, but, unfortunately, **there is also bad news for military religious freedom from 2020.**

In September, while the NDAA was being crafted by Congress, a core Department of Defense Instruction on religion was completely transformed by Trump Defense Department appointee Matthew P. Donovan, the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.

[...]

There is hope under a new administration and new Congress

Under a new administration, and if Democrats gain control of the Senate, they could do away with RFRA, and with a repeal of this **"sword against fellow Americans,"** as Marci A. Hamilton called this law in her excellent article, necessitating a **revision of the Trump Defense Department's new RFRA-based DoDI 1300.17.**

[...]

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SAN ANTONIO EXPRESS-NEWS EDITORIAL BOARD AGREES WITH MRFF ON NAZI HEADSTONE REMOVAL

Headstones didn't inform; they insulted

Friday, January 1, 2021

BACKGROUND: On December 23, 2020, two swastika-adorned Nazi prisoner of war headstones were quietly removed from Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery, the result of a MRFF-initiated fight to get these symbols of hate and anti-Semitism out of an American veterans cemetery. The VA had initially vowed to preserve the headstones, but eventually caved to pressure from MRFF and its allies. When it came time to actually remove the stones, the VA attempted to keep it quiet, but thanks to *San Antonio Express-News* reporter Sig Christenson, who was tipped off about the removal by a tipster, the event was photographed and chronicled by his paper, and the story went viral in the major media.

The *Express-News* Editorial Board later expressed its agreement with MRFF in a January 1 editorial:

"... we agree with the sentiments of Michael L. 'Mikey' Weinstein, founder and president of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation, who slammed the VA's decision to keep the removal quiet."

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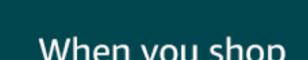
If unable to access the article due to a paywall, San Antonio Express-News's website states: Unlimited Digital Access 99¢ for the first 12 weeks (renews at \$3.99/week, tax included) Cancel Anytime.

Previous Coverage of MRFF-Initiated Nazi Headstone Removal

12/23/20 – MRFF's Resolute Efforts Prevail! Veterans Administration Finally Removes Nazi Headstones From Fort Sam Houston Nat'l Cemetery

12/28/20 – MRFF-Initiated Removal of Nazi Swastika Engraved Headstones Goes Viral in Major Media

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