



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

May 1, 2015

Captain W. Douglas Pfeifle  
Commanding Officer  
Recruit Training Command  
U.S. Department of Navy  
3355 Illinois Street  
Great Lakes, IL 60088

Dear CAPT Pfeifle:

We are in receipt of your most recent response regarding the violation of religious liberty rights under your command and, frankly, continue to find it lacking.

We have testified before the same Congressional panels. We have spoken out on the same incidents in the services. And, we are always on opposing sides, but in this instance it is easy for us both to say that the Navy went too far and is clearly in violation of the Constitutional religious liberty rights of American sailors at the Recruit Training Command.

Disappointingly, your misinterpretation and misapplication of Navy regulations not only separates sailors from their Constitutionally-guaranteed religious liberty, it also puts their very health and well-being in jeopardy. Access to religious services has been specifically noted as crucial to bolstering resilience in service members and preventing suicide in the services.

You note in your response of 30 April that under your command, the RTC has made steps in providing religious services for other minority religious recruits, such as Islamic services. We applaud your progress; but that does not excuse your actions here. It is our understanding that Earth-based religious services is the most requested type of worship for which there is currently no access. Providing an hour for contemplation and reflection cannot be equated with worship time. Providing interfaith literature cannot be equated with worship time either.

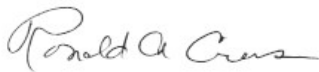
Furthermore, it is our understanding that a year ago, in May 2014, sailors were told that a uniformed spiritual leader would be sought to lead Earth-based services. Mr. Chantry has been providing such services for the past three years and experienced an influx of worshippers. As he notes, he serves the spiritual needs of as many as 200 recruits. It makes no sense to stop providing for these sailors simply because you have taken steps to accommodate the faith needs of other sailors. Further, the Navy Times reported on 22 April 2015 that the decision by Commanding Officer would curtail access to religious services for Unitarian-Universalists, Church of Christ and other non-liturgical Protestant faith groups.

It makes still less sense to stop providing for these sailors because you have not yet found a spiritual leader for them who wears the uniform. In fact, the Navy regulations are written in such a way to precisely account for such a scenario, providing for civilian faith leaders when uniformed ones are unavailable.

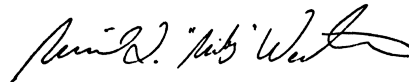
We maintain that you are in violation of Navy regulations and the Constitution you are sworn to uphold. We urge you to immediately reverse course and to reinstate the civilian-led Earth-based religious services, at least until such time as a uniformed leader can provide this same worship for your sailors.

We request your immediate attention to this matter and eagerly await your reply.

Sincerely,



Dr. Ronald A. Crews  
CH (COL) USA Retired  
Executive Director,  
Chaplain Alliance for Religious Liberty



Michael L. "Mikey" Weinstein, Esq.  
President and Founder,  
Military Religious Freedom Foundation

cc: Members of the Senate Armed Services Committee  
Members of the House Armed Services Committee  
The Honorable Ashton Carter, United States Secretary of Defense  
General Martin E. Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff  
The Honorable Ray Mabus, United States Secretary of the Navy  
Admiral Jonathan Greenert, Chief of Naval Operations  
Rear Admiral Margaret Grun Kibben, Chief of Chaplains of the United States Navy