

GAG RULE ON MILITARY CHAPLAINS

On January 26, Archbishop Timothy Broglio joined with his fellow bishops in issuing a pastoral letter criticizing the Obama administration for violating the conscience rights of Catholics. The only difference was that Broglio's letter, which was to be read from the pulpit by military chaplains, was initially censored.

The Army's Office of the Chief of Chaplains notified Archbishop Broglio that he was not authorized to have his letter read from the pulpit. Broglio shot back saying he stands "firm in the belief, based on legal precedent" that the Army had no right to issue the gag order. He said the attempt to muzzle his free speech violated his rights and "those same rights of all military chaplains and their congregants."

After Archbishop Broglio met with Secretary of the Army John McHugh, a compromise was reached: the letter would be allowed to be read providing that the last sentence, "We cannot, we will not, comply with this unjust law," was excised; the government argued it could be seen as a call to civil disobedience. Still, the damage was done, and once again the Obama administration unnecessarily picked a fight with Catholics.

That this abridgment of the military chaplains' First Amendment right to freedom of speech—protesting the abridgment of the First Amendment rights of Catholics to religious liberty—should come from an administration that supports the right of the "Occupy" movement thugs is unbelievable. But this is what we've come to in 2012. This could be a long year.