

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY AMENDMENT OPPOSED

The Obama administration recently announced that it “strongly objects” to a National Defense Authorization Act amendment that would protect the religious liberty of men and women in the Armed Forces. The reason, it was announced, was that the amendment would have a “significant adverse effect on good order, discipline, morale, and mission accomplishment.”

If the religious liberty of the Armed Forces were secure, there would be no need for an amendment to safeguard it. Sadly, however, there is. Not so long ago, for example, a senior officer at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, sent out a lengthy email in which he instructed his subordinate officers to recognize “the religious right in America” as a “domestic hate group” akin to the Ku Klux Klan and the Neo-Nazis, because of its opposition to homosexual behavior.

In another instance, the Air Force censored a video created by a military chaplain on the grounds that it made use of the word “God” in its presentation. It was feared that making use of the word might offend Muslims and atheists. Coast Guard Rear Admiral William Lee told a National Day of Prayer audience that religious liberty was being threatened and service members are being told to hide their faith in Christ. There are many more examples at hand to cite; far too many, unfortunately.

But there is hope, nonetheless. Now Congressman John Fleming of Louisiana wants to make sure that the military accommodates religious expression, and for that he should certainly be commended. Congressman Fleming was recently quoted in an interview as saying that “This administration is aggressively hostile towards religious beliefs that it deems to be politically incorrect.” Importantly, however, Fleming is not

an absolutist. A former military man himself, he explicitly allows for exceptions based on "military necessity."

In a statement later released by the federal government's Office of Management and Budget, it was said that officers in the military need to exercise greater discretion in order "to address potentially problematic speech and actions within their units." The office also said that Fleming's amendment "would have a significant adverse effect on good order, discipline, morale and mission accomplishment."

All speech is "potentially problematic," but, still, that is hardly an argument for curbing it. It is also a red herring to say that by ensuring the First Amendment rights to free speech and religious liberty, it will cause a threat to "good order, discipline and mission accomplishment" in the military. Really?

The Obama administration didn't worry about "good order, discipline and mission accomplishment" when it was touting the virtues of gays serving openly in the military. As for morale, it is being undermined by the censorial environment that religious men and women in uniform have to tolerate. Again, the examples are too many to enumerate here.

When it comes to those who elect to mutilate their genitals in transgender surgery, we are told they can't have too many rights. When it comes to suspected Muslim terrorists, we are told they cannot have too many rights. When it comes to pre-teen girls seeking to get birth control pills behind their parents' back, we are told they cannot have too many rights. But when it comes to the religious rights of the Armed Forces, we are told they already have too many rights. We wonder why the discrepancy in the distribution of rights.