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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3303

May 1, 2013

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

This week I was greatly concerned upon hearing news that military chaplains could be court martialled for simply sharing their faith. I trust that you will see this news the same way that I do: as a serious threat to religious freedom.

For over a decade I have fought for the constitutional rights of military chaplains whose religious freedoms have long been under attack. Military chaplains provide a valuable service to our nation's service members, especially during a time of war. To muzzle and possibly even court martial a chaplain for doing their job is simply unacceptable. At a time when American service members are fighting bravely for freedom in foreign lands, it is beyond belief that they cannot enjoy those same freedoms in the United States military.

I am also troubled that Mikey Weinstein of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation was invited to the Pentagon to provide his thoughts on Defense Department policies on religious tolerance. Mr. Weinstein has a most troubling track record of attacking faith in the military and has compared military chaplains to terrorists and bigots from the days of segregation.

Mr. President, one of the most important ideals that our nation was founded upon is that of religious freedom. Religious freedom, however, should never be construed to mean freedom *from* religion. I ask that you immediately reach out to the Defense Department and ensure that service members of all faiths are allowed to exercise their constitutional freedoms. Further, I would ask that the Pentagon reach out to people and organizations who better respect our nation's long held ideals of religious freedom.

Your timely response to this urgent issue is most appreciated. If I may be of any assistance, please feel free to contact my office.

Sincerely,



Walter B. Jones
Member of Congress

Cc: The Honorable Chuck Hagel, Secretary of Defense