

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Office of the Secretary of Defense/Secretary Ashton B. Carter
FROM: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS)
SUBJECT: Protecting Religious Rights of Service Members Per Recent DoD LGBT Policy Changes

1. As the second-largest Lutheran church body in the United States, with 2 million-plus members in more than 6,100 congregations across America, we of the LCMS request OSD include specific protections in all memos, directives, instructions, Equal Opportunity policies, and any other guidance that derives from them, to safeguard the rights of all chaplains, service members, DoD civilians, DoD contractors and medical personnel, and to explicitly prohibit punitive actions or intimidations for expressing personal religious beliefs with respect to DoD's policies on LGBT issues, such policies including the recent DoD Instruction for implementing the new transgender policy and also the now-mandated LGBT Pride Month.
2. We also request the above-listed DoD personnel be provided the freedom to decline participation in, for instance, LGBT Pride Month events, any training sessions that present LGBT issues in a manner contrary to one's religious faith, especially any training that presents traditional Christian teachings as bigotry, or any other event or activity wherein participation would represent a violation of conscience informed by sincerely held religious belief. We request that DoD and DoD-affiliated personnel also not be required to use the latest litany of transgender pronouns in the workplace, if they are perceived to be contrary to affected personnel's religious faith. We ask that these protections be codified in DoD and service-specific guidance.
3. Current DoD and service-specific policies and guidance for religious protections do not provide sufficient protections for all DoD and DoD-affiliated personnel, as they allow for implementation of a wide range of subjective religious restrictions based on what a local commander deems as contrary to "good order and discipline." Again, what we seek are specific protections for expressing personal religious beliefs to be codified in additional DoD and subsequent service-specific guidance.
4. We in the LCMS have the highest regard and utmost appreciation for the daily sacrifices our nation's service members — each and every one of them — make each day. We therefore pray for their safety and well-being as well as for their freedom to live and express their religious faith not only within the confines of a chapel, but also on the battlefield, in the workplace and in the community.
5. We submit this request to you, the Secretary of Defense, for your consideration in view of recently implemented DoD policies which favor positions held by LGBT activists and other advocates. We respectfully request you respond to us with your decision regarding these matters in writing.

Signed:



Chaplain Craig G. Muehler
CAPT, CHC, USN (Ret.), Director, Ministry to the Armed Forces
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod



Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison, President
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod