



UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

JUN 24 2013

The Honorable Doug Lamborn
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Lamborn:

Thank you for your letter to the Secretary of Defense regarding concerns about religious freedom and the status of the Department of Defense (DoD) implementation of regulations that carry out the conscience protections under section 533 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013 (Public Law 112-239, Section 533). Oversight of the military chaplaincy falls under my purview, and I have been asked to respond.

I want to reaffirm that the DoD and the Military Services place a high value on the rights of military personnel and their families to observe the tenets of their religions. We recognize that the free exercise of religion is an important element of the operational readiness and well-being of our force. Our chaplains are vital to our ability to support the free exercise of religion by our military personnel and their families, which includes chaplains' freedom to preach and conduct religious worship according to the dictates of their religious organization ecclesiastical endorsement.

DoD is currently still in the midst of revising DoD Instructions, 1300.17 "Accommodation of Religious Practices Within the Military Services," and 1304.28, "Guidance for the Appointment of Chaplains for the Military Departments," to implement section 533. I want to assure you that we have not previously consulted with any non-military organizations nor intend to do so in the future about the revision of these instructions. Finally, we expect to issue the revised Instructions by October 2013 and December 2013, respectively.

Again, I want to thank you for your continued interest in the protection of the free exercise of religion for our chaplains, military personnel, and their families. I have sent a similar reply to other Members of Congress who signed your letter.

Sincerely,


Jessica L. Wright
Acting