

January 16, 2015

Mr. Tim Wildmon
President
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LTG (Ret.) William G. Boykin
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Executive Vice President
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801 G Street, NW
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Honorable John McHugh
Secretary of the Army
101 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310-0101

Dear Mr. Secretary:

On December 17, 2014, the Restore Military Religious Freedom Coalition, of which our organizations are both members, sent you a letter discussing the unjustified disciplinary actions taken against Chaplain (CPT) Joseph Lawhorn of the 5th Ranger Battalion (Fort Benning).

The Coalition expressed its opinion that Chaplain Lawhorn's discussion of depression and his personal experience fighting it were commendable for being so open and honest. His religious faith was a key component in his victory over depression, and he indicated in his talk that this might also be the case for others. It seems reasonable that *any* person might make this observation when discussing this topic, but it should hardly be surprising that a chaplain made this point.

Since late November when the details of Chaplain Lawhorn's case have become known, there has been a groundswell of support expressed on his behalf. During this season of Christmas and New Year's between FRC and AFA petitions and email campaigns alone, over 70,000 members of the public have expressed their support for Chaplain Lawhorn, stating their belief that the letter of concern placed in his file by his former Brigade Commander, Colonel David G. Fivecoat, should be rescinded.

We ask that you consider the opinions of these citizens who believe a great wrong has been done. Colonel Fivecoat's actions were unreasonable as a matter of good order and discipline, but there are larger, more serious implications.

The Army has a significant problem with depression and suicide. It seems logical that all potential solutions for resolving this devastating problem should be explored, including the spiritual dimensions of the issue. Col. Fivecoat's actions, if not corrected by rescission of the letter of concern, will have a chilling effect across the Army. Why would chaplains or counselors bare their souls to help those in need if they believe that punishment might await them? They are unlikely to do so, and the Army's efforts in fighting suicide will be undermined.

We cannot believe this is the outcome you want. Sweeping this matter under the rug because a file or letter may "disappear" administratively is not an option because everyone in the Army knows about this situation. Social media will not allow this letter to be buried, so it must be rescinded.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Tim Wildmon
American Family Association



William Boykin
Family Research Council

cc: Major General Austin S. Miller
Commanding General
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