

Ex-chaplains reject change for gays in the military: Say they will be forced to choose whether to obey God or humans

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More than 40 retired military chaplains have warned President Obama and Defense Secretary Robert Gates that allowing gays to serve openly in the military will force current chaplains to choose between obeying God or men.

“This forced choice must be faced, since orthodox Christianity—which represents a significant percentage of religious belief in the armed forces—does not affirm homosexual behavior,” the chaplains wrote in an April 28 letter spearheaded by the Family Research Council and the Alliance Defense Fund.

The retired chaplains—affiliated with conservative denominations such as the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, the Presbyterian Church in America and the Southern Baptist Convention—said the change could force chaplains to water down their teachings or force them to counsel views that conflict with official military policies.

In February, Gates said the Pentagon would spend a year studying the ramifications of repealing the 17-year-old don’t ask/don’t tell policy.

Welton Gaddy, a Baptist pastor who is president of the Interfaith Alliance, criticized the retired chaplains’ letter, saying it is “fraught with illogical reasoning” about issues such as counseling. “By this logic, we also should ban all service members whose gambling habits, treatment of spouses, and views on abortion, politics or the economy are not in line with those of the chaplains,” he said.

In a related development, Andrews Air Force Base withdrew an invitation to Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council, to speak at a National Prayer

Luncheon last February. Officials said statements on Perkins's Web site opposing gay members of the military were "incompatible" with the role of military members.

Franklin Graham, long criticized for his past statements that Islam is an "evil and wicked religion," was barred from speaking at the Pentagon for a National Day of Prayer event in May.

As a result, a Republican congressman from Georgia, Jack Kingston, has called for a congressional investigation into possible "clerical censorship" after Graham and Perkins were disinvited from military prayer events.

Perkins welcomed the call for an investigation. "DOD should stand for the Department of Defense—not the Department of Disinvitation of Bible-believing Christians," Perkins said. *-Religion News Service*