

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 8, 2011

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to request that you respond to the need for specific conscience and religious freedom protections for military chaplains and other service members during implementation of the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (DADT).

The repeal of DADT implies official military support for the normalization of homosexual behavior, raising concerns that service members whose consciences or religious beliefs would conflict with that objective will face discrimination and disapproval. This concern would seem to be validated by reports that religious liberty is a source of much discussion and considerable confusion in repeal training classes. In an atmosphere of change regarding sexual conduct rules, service members should be assured that the Department of Defense continues to place “a high value on the rights of members of the Military Services to observe the tenets of their respective religions” (DoD Directive 1300.17). Chaplains, the guardians of the free exercise of religion in the military, would seem to be particularly vulnerable to criticism resulting from the expression of religious belief.

We believe the vital role of religious faith in the lives of American service members can be protected by establishing and implementing the following principles:

- First, the military is committed to protecting religious liberty—including religious expression—for individual chaplains and service members unless clear evidence causes commanders to conclude that good order and discipline will be harmed.
- Second, the military will not take an official position on the morality of sexual orientation, and will not stifle the non-disruptive expression of religious viewpoints regarding sexual orientation or other topics of cultural and religious interest.
- Third, in a military comprised of individuals from all walks of life and many different faiths (and no faith at all), it is incumbent on service members to be tolerant of other service members’ religious (or nonreligious) expression, even if such expression may be subjectively offensive to a given service member.
- Fourth, Chaplains must be free—when operating in the pulpit and within the context of religious counseling—to advance and propagate the values and beliefs of their sponsoring religion or denomination.
- Fifth, actual harassment of and discrimination against service members—regardless of whether the harassment or discrimination relates to sexual orientation, religion, or

any protected classification under DoD policy—impairs good order and discipline and will not be tolerated.

We believe that the installation of the above principles is vital to preserving the integrity of the unique and powerful expression of our military's identity as a diverse American institution. We would ask that you confirm that you intend to make these principles an integral part of the implementation of repeal of DADT and, in so doing, formally assure all Americans that our citizens need not leave their faith at home when they volunteer to serve.

Sincerely,



J. RANDY FORBES
Member of Congress



DUNCAN HUNTER
Member of Congress



SCOTT GARRETT
Member of Congress



ROSCOE BARTLETT
Member of Congress



FRANK WOLF
Member of Congress



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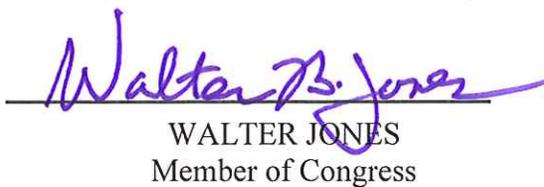


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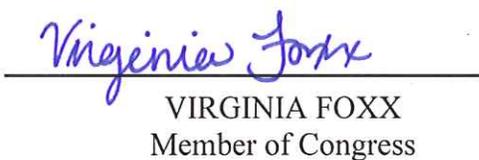

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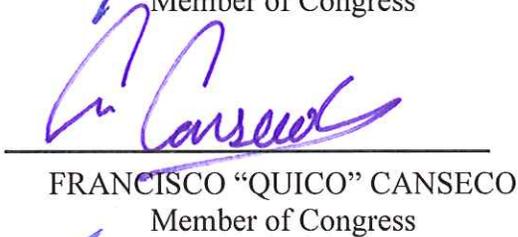

MICHAEL CONAWAY
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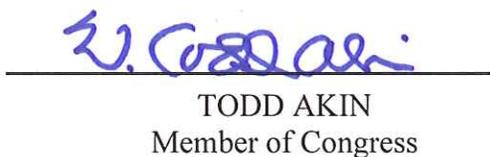

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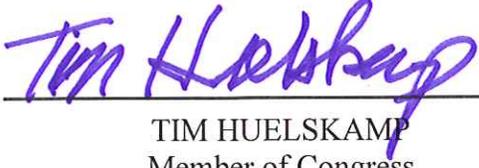

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