

**First Liberty Files Lawsuit Against U.S. Air Force Officials for Assault at Retirement Ceremony**

*Suit alleges multiple civil rights violations when decorated veteran was assaulted over use of the word “God”*

**Washington, DC**—First Liberty Institute and attorneys with Kirkland and Ellis filed a lawsuit this evening with the United States District Court for the District of Columbia on behalf of Oscar Rodriguez, Jr. and Charles “Chuck” Roberson alleging that Air Force officials violated the religious liberty of both Rodriguez and Roberson when uniformed Airmen abruptly interrupted a flag-folding ceremony at Roberson’s retirement and assaulted Rodriguez before he could use the word “God” in a flag folding speech.

“No one should be assaulted for saying the word ‘God’ on an Air Force base,” said Hiram Sasser, General Counsel for First Liberty Institute. “Certainly, our United States Airmen are strong enough to be exposed to the word ‘God’ at a retirement ceremony.”

During Roberson’s retirement ceremony held in April 2016 at Travis Air Force base, at which Rodriguez—himself a retired Airman—was Roberson’s invited guest, multiple, uniformed Air Force officials assaulted Rodriguez and forcibly removed Rodriguez from the ceremony for starting a speech that would include the word “God.” (Read Oscar’s entire speech by [clicking here](#).)

“I spent my career in the Air Force defending this country from its enemies,” said Oscar Rodriguez. “I never thought any Air Force official would be afraid that someone would use the word ‘God’ on base and I am shocked that they would assault me for trying!”

After the incident, Air Force officials clarified that scripts containing religious language may be used during flag-folding ceremonies. However, First Liberty was forced to file a lawsuit when officials refused to apologize to Rodriguez for the assault, to Roberson for ruining the only retirement ceremony he would ever have, and to make sure other members of the armed forces know their religious liberty is protected as well.

“This retirement ceremony was supposed to be the culmination of my career in the Air Force,” said Chuck Roberson. “I couldn’t believe what happened. I still can’t believe it. I want these Air Force officials to apologize for ruining this once in a lifetime moment.”

To read the complaint, [click here](#).

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**About First Liberty Institute**

[First Liberty Institute](#) is the largest legal organization in the nation dedicated exclusively to defending religious freedom for all Americans.

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