

**Army Chaplain Asks to be Spared from  
Career-Ending Punishment for Religious Beliefs**  
*Chaplain faces reprimand for following Army rules, religious tenets*

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**WASHINGTON, DC**—First Liberty Institute today sent a letter to the U.S. Army urging it to reverse an investigator’s decision and recommendation that First Liberty client, Army Chaplain Scott Squires, be disciplined for following both Army regulations and the religious tenets of his endorsing denomination. Earlier this year, an Army investigator concluded that Chaplain Squires discriminated because his chaplain endorsing agency, the North American Mission Board (NAMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), forbids its chaplains from facilitating marriage retreats that include same-sex couples. Doing so would violate “The Baptist Faith and Message” adopted by the SBC, and could result in a chaplain losing their endorsement. The Army requires its chaplains to adhere to their endorsers’ rules and religious tenets.

“Chaplain Squires should not have his career ruined for following the rules of both his faith and the Army,” said Mike Berry, Deputy General Counsel and Director of Military Affairs at First Liberty. “Federal law protects Chaplain Squires and prohibits the military from punishing any chaplain who acts in accordance with their religious tenets. We urge the Army to follow the law, just as Chaplain Squires did. Chaplains should not have to give up their First Amendment rights in order to serve.”

Under federal law and Department of Defense regulations, the military may not take adverse action against a chaplain who acts in accordance with his or her religious tenets.

The complaint against Chaplain Squires originated when he explained to a Soldier that he was unable to conduct a Strong Bonds marriage retreat that included same sex couples due to his NAMB restrictions. He then successfully worked to ensure that the Soldier was placed in the next available Strong Bonds event conducted by an unrestricted chaplain.

“I was shocked the investigator concluded that I should be reprimanded for doing something I’m required to do under Army regulations and my endorser’s rules,” said Chaplain Squires. “I hope the Army sees that I was simply following Army regulations and the tenets of my church.”

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**About First Liberty Institute**

[First Liberty Institute](http://www.firstliberty.org) is a non-profit public interest law firm and the largest legal organization in the nation dedicated exclusively to defending religious freedom for all Americans.

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