



News Release

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Pennsylvania National Guard Group Allows Tour for Scouting Organization After Letter from Legal Groups

Pennsylvania Trail Life USA scouting troop had been denied equal access to National Guard Facility because of its religious affiliation

Annville, PA—Fort Indiantown Gap National Guard yesterday agreed to allow a Pennsylvania-based Trail Life USA scouting troop to tour the facility after the Independence Law Center and First Liberty Institute sent a letter urging that the tour be allowed. Recently, the Guard denied a request by the troop to tour the facility specifically because the group is a “religious organization,” even though other scouting, civic, and youth groups have been allowed to tour and use the facilities.

In response to the letter, the Guard agreed that religious group should be treated the same as any other civic organization.

“We are grateful that Guard has chosen to open its doors to the Trail Life troop,” said Independence Law Center Senior Counsel Jeremy Samek. “The boys from Trail Life USA’s troop deserve to be treated fairly and equally. I know that they are excited to get the opportunity to interact with those who defend our freedom.”

Lea Patterson, Counsel for First Liberty Institute added, “The Trail Life troop is very pleased with the outcome and appreciates the manner in which the Guard worked so quickly to resolve this dispute.”

In February, Trail Life USA Troopmaster Joseph Eveses sent an email to arrange for Troop PA-2717 to take a tour of Fort Indiantown Gap. Initially, a Captain at the base responded that he would be their tour guide, adding that “Boy Scout troops . . . regularly come here.” Eveses then filed the required paperwork, mentioning in the required organizational description field that Trail Life was “a Christian scouting organization.” In April, a Staff Sergeant called Troopmaster Eveses and informed him that after reviewing the submitted documents, the Trail Life Troop would not be permitted to do a tour because Trail Life was a religious organization.

In its letter, attorneys with First Liberty and Independence Law Center explained that “Fort Indiantown Gap’s denial of access to the base facilities, which are open to other civic, fraternal, and youth organizations and for youth activities, constitutes viewpoint discrimination. Fort Indiantown Gap has opened up facilities to other groups, and it must equally open up those facilities to religious groups as well. Applying the Garrison Commander guidance to deny Trail Life Troop equal treatment is discriminatory and unconstitutional.”

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About Independence Law Center

[Independence Law Center](#) is a Pennsylvania-based pro-bono legal organization dedicated to advancing civil rights.

About First Liberty Institute

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

To arrange an interview, contact Lacey McNeil with First Liberty Institute at media@firstliberty.org or by calling 972-941-4453 or Dan Bartkowiak with Independence Law Center at dbart@indlawcenter.org or by calling 717-657-4990