



News Release

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Contact: Lacey McNeil, media@firstliberty.org
Direct: 972-941-4453

U.S. Military Gives in to Activist Demands to Discriminate Against Company Because of Inspirational Dog Tags

Religious liberty law firm urges Army to reinstate trademark license for replica dog tags, other inspirational jewelry

Washington, DC—First Liberty Institute today sent a letter to the United States Army Trademark Licensing office urging it to allow Shields of Strength (“Shields”), a private, faith-based, business to continue producing military-themed items such as replica “dog tags” and jewelry. The Army banned Shields after citing the “negative press” it received in connection with a complaint from the Military Religious Freedom Foundation (“MRFF”).

You can read the letter [here](#).

“It’s a cruel insult to our service members to deny them a source of inspiration, hope, and encouragement simply because it contains a religious message,” said Mike Berry, Chief of Staff for First Liberty Institute. “The MRFF is twisting the law in an attempt to deny Shields of Strength to military personnel. Army officials should just ignore the message of those who make their living by being offended.”

“I was shocked that there are groups in America that would go on the attack against Shields of Strength that have inspired millions of our fighting men and women and their loved ones,” said Kenny Vaughan, owner of Shields of Strength. “I hope the Army sees that the very freedom our soldiers fight for is at stake.”

In its letter to the Army, First Liberty argues that, “Once the government has created a limited public forum via a trademark licensing regime, it cannot ‘discriminate against speech on the basis of its viewpoint.’ The Army is therefore prohibited from discriminating against [Shields] because of its inclusion of biblical references on its products, in its advertisements, or on its website.”

For over 20 years Kenny Vaughan and his wife Tammie have been making Shields of Strength replica dog tags with encouraging Bible verses or references on them for service members and first responders. Shields of Strength replica dog tags bear various military-themed emblems, logos, or insignia on one side and various faith-based messages such as Scripture verses or references on the other side. To date, the Vaughns have made over 4 million dog tags and given hundreds of thousands to the U.S. military and other ministries. During the Iraq War, they donated over 50,000 pieces a month and even fulfilled a single request for 30,000 pieces. Each branch of the military grants licenses to vendors to feature military trademarks on products.

Earlier this year, MRFF sent a letter to the Army threatening “administrative and litigation complaints” to “compel compliance” unless the SoS stopped including religious references on its licensed products.

For more information go to FirstLiberty.org.

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About First Liberty Institute

[First Liberty Institute](#) 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.

To arrange an interview, contact Lacey McNeil at media@firstliberty.org or by calling 972-941-4453.