

**Lawsuit Filed After U.S. Military Discriminates
Against Company Because of Inspirational “Dog Tags”**

*Religious liberty law firm files federal lawsuit in effort to reinstate trademark license for
replica dog tags, other inspirational jewelry*

Washington, DC— Today, First Liberty Institute and the law firm Fish & Richardson filed a complaint on behalf of Shields of Strength (“Shields”) in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Texas, Tyler Division. Shields has been making military themed replica dog tags and jewelry with encouraging Bible verses on them for various branches of service for over 20 years. In 2019 the Department of Defense, at the urging of an activist organization’s cease-and desist letter, prohibited Shields from producing or selling licensed items with religious content.

You can read the complaint 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, General Counsel for First Liberty Institute. “DOD officials caved to the empty threats of those who make their living by being offended. There’s no legal reason for the military to discriminate against Shields of Strength.”

Kenny and Tammie Vaughan started their company in 1998 with the mission to encourage men and women of our armed forces by providing them with a tangible reminder of Divine protection and strength. Since then, Shields has sold or donated over four million dog tags. Each branch of the armed forces licenses the use of their trademarks for private or commercial use. Shields received licenses from the Army, Marine Corps, and Air Force, but after a complaint by an anti-religious activist organization, the Department of Defense stripped Shields’ of its license to make the inspirational dog tags.

According to Shields’ complaint, the DOD’s policy declaring that, “DOD marks may not be licensed for any purpose intended to promote....religious beliefs” violates the Free Exercise Clause, the Establishment Clause, and the Free Speech Clause of the U.S. Constitution.”

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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.

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