



News Release

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Law Firm Urges Court to Halt Department of Defense Religious Discrimination against Shields of Strength

Shields forced to reject requests from military members for replica dog tags with Bible verses unless court intervenes

Washington, DC—Today, First Liberty Institute and the law firm Fish & Richardson filed a motion for preliminary injunction on behalf of Shields of Strength (“Shields”), seeking to immediately prohibit the Department of Defense (“DoD”) from enforcing its discriminatory policy preventing Shields from producing and distributing military themed replica dog tags with encouraging Bible verses.

The motion, filed in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Texas, Tyler Division, can be read [here](#).

“Military commanders and servicemembers regularly ask for Shields of Strength products, but the DoD’s unconstitutional policy forces it to say no,” said Mike Berry, Director of Military Affairs for First Liberty Institute. “We are asking the court to right this wrong immediately and allow Shields of Strength to deploy its inspirational messages to the troops who ask for them.”

“It’s frustrating that the government is preventing me from providing hope and courage to the men and women who protect our freedoms.” said Kenny Vaughan, owner of Shields of Strength. “I hope the court restores our ability to serve our brave military members with Shields of Strength.”

As an example of the hostile and arbitrary application of the DoD’s policy, the Army arbitrarily denied the use of the phrase “One Nation Under God” but approved “In God We Trust” on Shields. One email from the Army expressed concern that “One Nation Under God” is not “politically correct.”

For nearly 25 years, Kenny and his wife Tammie have been making Shields of Strength, military themed replica dog tags and jewelry with encouraging Bible verses, worn by American service members around the world. 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. First Liberty filed a federal lawsuit on behalf of Shields in December.

Today’s petition argues, “The DoD’s increasing religious hostility culminated last year when Shields was unable to renew even its limited use of the trademark licenses. Shields requests that this Court grant a preliminary injunction to maintain the status quo and

allow Shields to continue making, selling, and donating its products with military insignia and words during the pendency of this action. The Court should grant the motion for a preliminary injunction and prevent the DoD and its service branches from enforcing the “intended to promote . . . religious beliefs” language of DODI 5535.12 against Shields of Strength while the case is pending.”

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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.