



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on October 21, 2017

## Air Force Punishes Respected Officer for Refusing to Endorse Same-sex Marriage

A highly decorated and respected Air Force officer has been punished by his superiors over his refusal to sign a document affirming the same-sex “marriage” of a retiring subordinate.

Colonel Leland Bohannon (shown) is an experienced pilot with over 3,000 flight hours in such aircraft as the B-2A and B-52H bombers, as well as the recipient of the Bronze Star (for service in Afghanistan), the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, and the Air Medal. While his 20 years of Air Force service had made him eligible for a merit-based promotion to brigadier general, Bohannon found the promotion shelved and his career in jeopardy when he declined to sign an unofficial certificate of “spousal appreciation” for the “husband” of a retiring homosexual service member.



As reported by the conservative legal advocacy group First Liberty Institute, when the homosexual airman announced his retirement, Bohannon was forwarded a number of awards and honors to sign and present to the airman, including the spousal appreciation certificate. While Bohannon readily signed all of the other awards, his Christian conviction that marriage can only exist between a man and a woman prevented him from signing the unofficial honor to the airman’s “spouse.”

Even though a two-star general agreed to sign the certificate in place of Bohannon, when the retiring airman discovered that Bohannon had not signed the document himself, he filed a formal Equal Opportunity (EO) complaint, alleging that Bohannon had unlawfully discriminated against him on the basis of his sexual orientation.

Amazingly, an Air Force investigation substantiated the charges, which means that it agreed Bohannon is guilty of unlawful discrimination “because he did not personally sign an optional, unofficial certificate, even though he successfully obtained a far superior signature on the certificate,” explained First Liberty. “The Air Force investigation acknowledged that Col. Bohannon requested a religious accommodation, but stated that even if it had been granted, it would not change the outcome or Col. Bohannon’s ‘guilt.’”

First Liberty has filed an appeal of the discipline against Bohannon, noting in a letter to Air Force officials that there is “no requirement that a commander issue a spouse certificate. Moreover, the instruction does not require the commander to personally sign a certificate, should one be issued.”

The appeal letter adds that the EO investigator’s determination that Bohannon’s religious accommodation request made no difference in the outcome of the case “defies comprehension. Such a



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position renders religious accommodations meaningless. The primary purpose of a religious accommodation is to provide a legal justification for engaging, or refusing to engage, in particular conduct that is motivated by sincerely held religious beliefs. Religious accommodations exist to avoid placing service members in the religious and moral dilemma of having to violate their religious convictions in order to serve.”

Liberty Institute attorney Michael Berry said that unless the Air Force reverses the unfair ruling against Bohannon, the decorated and respected officer’s military career “is likely over, and he will likely have to retire as a colonel instead of as a general.”

Berry added that the action against Bohannon sends a clear message to others in military service: “If you do not have the politically correct viewpoint, you are not welcome in the military. The military is no longer a place of diversity and inclusion if you are a person who holds to a traditional belief on marriage.”



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