



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on October 5, 2011

Chaplains May Perform “Gay” Marriages — But Not at West Point’s Catholic Chapel

The answer is Yes — and No. Yes, the Pentagon said, despite the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), which defines marriage for federal purposes as only between a man and a woman, military chaplains may still perform “marriage” ceremonies between homosexual partners. Barely two weeks after the dropping of the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (DADT) policy, which effectively prohibited homosexuals from serving in the armed forces, the Pentagon has issued a new policy that will allow military’s chaplains to officiate at same-sex wedding ceremonies.



A memo on the [Defense Department website](#) reads: “A military chaplain may participate in or officiate any private ceremony, whether on or off a military installation, provided that the ceremony is not prohibited by applicable state and local law.” The memo adds, however that “a chaplain is not required to participate in or officiate a private ceremony if doing so would be in variance with the tenets of his or her religion.”

Homosexual activists applauded the move as a major step forward for “gay” rights. “As we move into a new era of open service, today’s decision by the Department of Defense ensures that all military families, including lesbian and gay military families, have equal access to military facilities,” said Joe Solmonese of the [Human Rights Campaign](#).

But one conservative lawmaker, U.S. Representative Todd Akin (R-Mo.), pointed out that the new policy is a violation of existing federal law. “The Department of Defense has decided to put the White House’s liberal agenda ahead of following the law,” Akin, chairman of the House Armed Services seapower and projection forces subcommittee, was quoted by [The Hill](#) as saying. “The Defense of Marriage Act makes it clear that for the purposes of the federal government, marriage is defined as between one man and one woman,” Akin said. “The use of federal property or federal employees to perform gay marriage ceremonies is a clear contravention of the law.”

Tony Perkins of the [Family Research Council](#), which conducted an intense campaign to stop the DADT repeal, also criticized the Pentagon move as illegal, adding that it “is outrageous that only ten days after repeal of the law against homosexuality in the Armed Forces, the Defense Department is already pushing the military further down the slippery slope.”

Likewise, Tim Wildmon of the [American Family Association](#) (AFA) called the move a “craven capitulation to the homosexual agenda. While conservative chaplains aren’t being forced to perform same-sex marriages yet, it will only be a matter of time before they are tagged as homophobic bigots and forced to choose between their values and a military career. We need courageous leaders in Washington who will work to reinstate the ban on homosexuality in the armed services while there is



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still room for people of faith.”

But even as the Pentagon caved in to the demands of homosexual activists, the administrators of at least one religious facility at a military base have said a loud and clear “No” to homosexual “marriages.” Taylor Henry, director of public affairs for the [Catholic Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA](#), confirmed that no homosexual marriage ceremonies will be allowed at the [Catholic Chapel of the Most Holy Trinity](#) at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

“Holy Trinity is an actual Catholic parish, unlike the non-denominational chapels that are found on other military installations, and the only services held there are Catholic services,” Henry told [CNSNews.com](#). “The Catholic Church does not perform the sacrament of matrimony for same-sex couples.”

Henry added that while other chaplains may well find themselves free to perform same-sex weddings at non-denominational chapels at U.S. military facilities, “no Catholic chaplain is authorized to perform a same-sex marriage under any circumstances.”

Meanwhile, the U.S. military’s Catholic Archbishop, Timothy Broglio, denounced the new military policy, noting, reported CNSNews.com, that “voters in 29 states have affirmed marriage as the union of one man and one woman by referendum — and 41 states total have adopted laws or constitutional amendments protecting marriage.”

The Archbishop said that the new policy “seeks to circumvent the clear will of the majority, whose unquestionable sovereignty has the last word in the system of government enshrined in the Federal Constitution.” He added that the 1996 DOMA statute “was due to the efforts of a substantial, bi-partisan majority in Congress and to then-President Clinton. As a Nation we walk down a dangerous path when appointed officials are allowed to thwart the will of the people.”

Photo: The interior of the Catholic Chapel of the Most Holy Trinity at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.



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