



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on June 24, 2019

National Guard Unit Tries to Ban Christian Scouting Group

A Pennsylvania National Guard unit got a lesson in First Amendment fairness after it attempted to ban a Christian scouting group from taking a tour of its facility.

It all began in February when a Pennsylvania troop for Trail Life USA, a Christian alternative to the Boy Scouts of America, contacted the National Guard unit in Fort Indian Gap, Pennsylvania, to schedule a tour of the facility. While National Guard officials initially agreed to host Trail Life troop PA-2717 for a tour, in April a staff sergeant with the Guard unit called back to say that the tour had been cancelled because of the troop's Christian affiliation.



In response, Trail Life USA contacted First Liberty Institute and the Pennsylvania-based Independence law center, two public policy legal groups that represent individuals and organizations whose religious and First Amendment freedoms have been violated.

In a pointed letter, the legal groups warned the National Guard that "Fort Indiantown Gap's denial of access to the base facilities, which are open to other civic, fraternal, and youth organizations and for youth activities, constitutes viewpoint discrimination."

John Stemberger, chairman of the Trail Life USA board, told Fox news he was disappointed that a "federal institution like the Army is buying into this leftist idea that faith has to be excluded from the public square. It's sad that an institution of our society is treating faith like it is some kind of bacteria or virus that needs to be exterminated from secular society. We need faith integrated with society."

The legal push-back prompted the National Guard to back down on its denial and welcome the Trail Life troop with open arms.

"We are grateful that Guard has chosen to open its doors to the Trail Life troop," Independence Law Center senior counsel Jeremy Samek said in a statement. "The boys from Trail Life USA's troop deserve to be treated fairly and equally. I know that they are excited to get the opportunity to interact with those who defend our freedom."

On its website, Trail Life USA says that its vision is to be "the premier national character development organization for young men which produces godly and responsible husbands, fathers, and citizens." It goes on to say that its mission is "to guide generations of courageous young men to honor God, lead with integrity, serve others, and experience outdoor adventure."

Image: [Screenshot of ad at trailifeusa.com](#)



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