



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on May 10, 2011

Navy Chaplains Can Perform Same-Sex Marriage Ceremonies

Chaplains in the U.S. Navy will be able to perform same-sex marriage ceremonies under the new military policy permitting openly homosexual individuals to serve in the armed forces. According to the Associated Press, Navy officials explained that they had updated chaplain training “after questions came up about civil ceremonies for gay couples.” The move comes as the Department of Defense prepares to complete the dismantling of the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” prohibition against homosexuals serving in the U.S. military.



With the relaxing of military standards will come the obvious demands by homosexuals to marry their same-sex partners, including ceremonies in military chapels. As reported by the [Navy Times](#), a memorandum from the Navy’s head chaplain, Rear Admiral Mark Tidd (pictured at left), advised that “consistent with the tenets of his or her religious organization, a chaplain may officiate a same-sex, civil marriage: if it is conducted in accordance with a state that permits same-sex marriage or union; and if that chaplain is, according to the applicable state and local laws, otherwise fully certified to officiate that state’s marriages.”

The memo added that “if the base is located in a state where same-sex marriage is legal, then base facilities may normally be used to celebrate the marriage. This is true for purely religious services (e.g., a chaplain blessing a union) or a traditional wedding (e.g., a chaplain both blessing and conducting the ceremony).” A Navy spokesperson clarified that chaplains would not be required to officiate at homosexual marriages if to do so would violate their faith.

Pro-family leaders were quick to point out that the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) would prohibit such ceremonies in military chapels, which prompted this response from Defense Department spokeswoman Eileen Lainez: “DOMA does not limit the type of religious ceremonies a chaplain may perform in a chapel on a military installation. Chaplains are authorized to perform religious ceremonies consistent with the practices of the chaplain’s faith group in chapels on military installations.”

But U.S. Representative Todd Akin (R-Mo.), chairman of the House Armed Services seapower subcommittee, said allowing chaplains to push aside DOMA is a clear violation of federal law. “While our President may not like this law, it is unbelievable that our Navy would issue guidance that clearly violates this law,” Akin said in a prepared statement. “While a state may legalize same-sex marriage, federal property and federal employees, like Navy chaplains, should not be used to perform marriages that are not recognized by federal law.”

A group of over 60 members of the House of Representatives backed up Akin’s comments with a joint letter to the Secretary of the Navy, asking how the Navy could be “exempt from federal law.” Noted the congressmen: “Offering up federal facilities and federal employees for same-sex marriage violates



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DOMA, which is still the law of the land ... and [which] all of the Armed Services are sworn to obey. It is not the place of any citizen of this country to pick and choose which laws they obey. We expect the [military]... to set the example in their application.”

Representative Duncan Hunter (R-Calif.) noted that the Navy’s response demonstrated the “type of uncertainty and confusion created in the rush” to dismantle “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” and pave the way for allowing homosexuals to serve in the military. “Trying to make sense of this issue ... is something that should have been thought out beforehand, assuming the administration was even serious about doing this efficiently, fairly, and respectfully,” Hunter’s communications director, Joe Kasper, told [CNSNews.com](#).

As reported by the [Family Research Council](#), a core of Republican congressmen were expected to introduce amendments to the Armed Services Committee that would address the President’s attempt to run roughshod over federal law and the religious freedoms of military personnel. One measure, expected from Representative Hunter, “would make it harder for President Obama to rubber stamp the ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ repeal by giving all the service chiefs a voice in the certification process,” reported FRC. “A second would reinforce the traditional definition of marriage in the military.” A third possibility would be to introduce “conscience exemptions like the ones we see in the medical field — only these provisions would protect service members who oppose homosexuality.”

Conservative and pro-family leaders encouraged concerned Americans to contact the members of the [House Armed Services Committee](#) and ask them to vote for the amendments.



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