



**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF EVANGELICAL
CHAPLAIN ENDORSERS (ICECE)
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22 April 2013

General Raymond Odierno
Army Chief of Staff
200 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310-0200

Chaplain (MG) Donald L. Rutherford
Army Chief of Chaplains
2700 Army Pentagon Room 1D143A
Washington, DC 20310

Dear General Odierno and Chaplain (MG) Rutherford:

One of the Endorsing Agents ICECE represents recently returned from an eight-day trip visiting his Military Chaplains. Every Army Chaplain he visited expressed frustration at the withdrawal of funding for "Strong Bonds" Resiliency Retreats for their soldiers and spouses. Over 100 couples were scheduled for these cancelled retreats. Perhaps thousands of couples will be impacted by this withdrawal of funding, not to mention the message the cancellation conveys to countless other couples.

You have acknowledged our men and women in uniform have deployed and redeployed numerous times in OIF and OEF, and have selflessly answered their nation's call again and again. As the war winds down, it is time for the Armed Services to care for them. Cancelling these retreats, which enhance a couple's relationship and resiliency, is a short sighted, knee-jerk reaction to sequestration. It conveys the Army's lack of appreciation for the significant sacrifices our Army men and women and their families have made and undermines their trust in a leadership that formerly recognized the importance of repairing, restoring and strengthening the marital bonds which repeated deployments stretch and stress to dangerous levels.

At almost the same time, DoD has promulgated new guidance granting same-sex couple privileges that will **cost** DoD more money. These concessions are granted contrary to law, as DOMA is still the law of the land. In essence, God honoring heterosexual couples are penalized for their sacrifice, and same sex couples are rewarded for what Scripture clearly condemns as immoral, deviate behavior.

In addition to recognizing the Army Family Covenant, the CSA Marching Orders state, "The Strength of our Soldiers is our Families". This is a courageous recognition that a strong family provides enormous emotional support for our soldiers. It seems incongruous to defund Strong Bonds, a vital part of ministry to strengthen marital ties, at a time when so many of our soldiers and their families have lived through multiple deployments to dangerous areas.

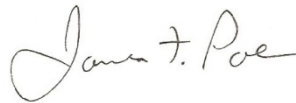
As a retired Navy Chaplain of thirty years active duty, I assure you "Strong Bonds" and Navy CREDO retreats are critical to the healing and welfare of our exhausted warriors and their families. Strong

leadership flowing from the top is the best example to young leaders and encourages them to become the strong leaders the CSA's Marching Orders seek to develop for the future.

Please intercede before DoD and on behalf of these families. Restoring funding for these retreats is the right thing to do and funds should be restored immediately.

Thank you for your continued advocacy for our men and women in uniform.

Very Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James F. Poe". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

James F. Poe
CAPT, CHC, USN (Ret.)
Chairman,
International Conference of
Evangelical Chaplain Endorsers