



**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF
EVANGELICAL CHAPLAIN ENDORSERS (ICECE)**
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PRESS RELEASE

May 20, 2010

Dear Member of Congress:

The International Conference of Evangelical Chaplain Endorsers (ICECE) represents faith groups which endorse over 300 military chaplains. ICECE opposes the repeal of 10 U.S.C. § 654 (hereafter “the Ban”) because it will seriously damage, if not destroy, the Armed Forces Chaplains Corps; raise serious constitutional and legal issues affecting ICECE’s chaplains; and other chaplains and service members whose faith requires adherence to the commands of Scripture; and will undermine good order and discipline. These reasons are explained below. If Congress holds further hearings on this issue, ICECE requests we be allowed to participate to address them in detail on behalf of our chaplains who cannot speak for themselves and our churches who support and send chaplains and other military personnel.

Repealing the Ban raises several constitutional and legal issues, which will arise from the military services’ approach to changing the military culture. Change in the military is achieved by regulations reinforced by training, accompanied by rewards and punishment for military members, usually in the form of military justice, poor rating reports and/or fewer promotions.

First, chaplains are hired as representatives of their faith groups who are on loan from their home churches, their faith communities, and from their endorsers. ICECE chaplains and other chaplains, who come from faith traditions which oppose homosexuality because of their belief in the biblical condemnation of homosexuality and homosexual behavior, will be unable to speak openly on this aspect of their Christian doctrine. Their position, mandated by Scripture, will be contrary to the government’s “official” position and policy. The scriptural view of homosexuality as sin and therefore damaging to humans, finds ample support in medical, health, and social science literature, facts which were supported by the Armed Services own 1993 evaluations in examining the impact of President Clinton’s attempt to allow open homosexuals to serve. Addressing the implications of the homosexual culture are and should be part of an Evangelical chaplain’s religious teaching and counseling, as they support scripture’s view of these practices. Discussing homosexuality related subjects and issues, whether in preaching, counseling, or providing advice, could and would be interpreted as divisive, hate speech, degrading, or violations of the statute’s proposed nondiscrimination mandate and regulations issued to enforce it. This results in violating the free exercise and free speech rights of ICECE chaplains and other chaplains whose faith holds a similar view of homosexuality. This becomes a clear violation of their constitutional rights of free speech and free exercise, and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act.

Second, the proposed language in both the House and Senate elevates homosexual conduct to a protected status. This constitutes governmental establishment of a hybrid government religion, *i.e.*, Evangelicals can keep all of your doctrine/theology except your stand on homosexuality. It will also destroy the DOD definition of a chaplain as a faith group representative. The chaplain must now represent the hybrid government religion. This hybrid government religion is a clear message the government disfavors/disapproves of those faith groups which

“And his feet shall stand that day upon the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem. . . and the Lord shall be King over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one.” Zech. 14:4,7

consider homosexual behavior a sin as identified in the Bible, a violation of the Establishment Clause which forbids government to favor/disfavor any religion or religion in general.

Third, repealing the Ban will result in an exodus of chaplains and service members from the military. Chaplains who can no longer represent their faith traditions in their preaching, teaching and counseling have lost their distinctiveness and their reason for pursuing military ministry. Those personnel who come from faith backgrounds which regard homosexuality as sin will encounter a multitude of conflicts. For instance, will homosexual couples have government housing in areas next to heterosexual families? How will single personnel be allowed to handle unwanted advances from homosexual personnel without being accused of prejudice, hate speech, etc.? More than a few of the chaplains endorsed by ICECE members have already said they would leave because of the hostile message and oppressive religious environment resulting from the repeal of § 654.

Fourth, repeal of § 654 will have a destructive effect on the military chapel congregations and the chapel communities, which are an integral and important part of the military culture and community. They are particularly essential in periods of high operational tempo because of the support they provide to military families. Chapel programs depend on enthusiastic and committed volunteers to lead and support the many programs vital to vibrant Chapel life, *e.g.*, youth groups, Sunday schools, AWANA, nursery ministries, Bible studies, etc. In many places evangelicals are the volunteers who sense a calling to serve the military community.

Christians love the sinner but stand against the sin. There are at least 11 Hebrew words for the word “sin.” The first is Chata which is the most common Hebrew word for sin—to trespass and give offense; to miss the mark of God’s standard. The Hebrew word Pasha means rebellion or to revolt. The third word is Maal which mean transgression and a lie. The fourth Hebrew word is Avon which means to be “warped.” The fifth Hebrew word is Aven which means nothingness—“there is a stamp of nothingness or unreality upon every departure from the Law of God.” The sixth word is Rasha which means wickedness. The seventh Hebrew word is Ra which means to break up, to ruin, or to hurt. The eighth Hebrew word is Amal which emphasizes the result of sin—which is labor, burdensome, and sorrow. The ninth Hebrew word is Aval which means perverse—departure from that which is normal. The tenth Hebrew word is Avar which means crossing the boundary into forbidden areas. The eleventh is Asheim which means guilt—guilty before God and must be paid for. There are at least seven Greek words for “sin.” The first Greek word is hamaria—to miss the mark. The second Greek word is parabasis—to transgress. The third Greek word is adikia—that which is not right. The fourth Greek word is asibeia—lack of holiness. The fifth Greek word is anomia—violation of the law of God. The sixth Greek word is poneiria—depravity. The seventh Greek word is epithumia—lust or desire for that which is forbidden. (<http://www.arielm.org/dcs/pdf/mbs095m.pdf>).

Traditional interpretation of Scripture would not be acceptable to gay couples, and they would not find acceptance in the traditional or evangelical chapel services. Repeal of § 654 would imply that homosexuals could openly take part in the command religious programs and volunteer in religious services where their actions would overwhelmingly be viewed as offensive and, in fact, opposed to classic, longstanding Christian beliefs and doctrines. The presence of only a few homosexuals, whose very lifestyle rejects the authority of God’s word, would change the culture of our chapels from welcoming and supporting to one of subtle hostility and tension. We believe this would cause many Chapel members, particularly those with families, to find other worship opportunities where they would not feel diminished or compromised by the presence of those who reject classic Christianity’s view of Scripture. Civilian churches place great value on military members because of their many skills and commitment, and once volunteers leave the Chapel, it is highly unlikely they will return. This consideration is especially important in overseas areas where there are few worship alternatives due to language and cultural differences. This negative view of the impact of homosexuals on Chapel communities is not mere speculation. Every denomination that has rejected the Scriptural view of homosexuality as sin has lost membership, and young families avoid them.

Fifth, if the ban is repealed, will our pulpits be protected from the new "nondiscrimination" policy? We think not. There are Christian "ex-gay" ministries. Would referring a person to one of these ministries or inviting them to speak at a Chapel program be considered hate speech, an equal opportunity violation or discrimination? Would an "ex-gay" be allowed to become a chaplain and would he or she be forbidden to share the destructive aspects of their gay experience and how they broke free from homosexuality, *i.e.*, became an ex-gay? These are fundamental free exercise, establishment and free speech issues that will impact our chaplains and evangelicals because we believe the Message of the Gospel and its grace is for ALL, including the lost, the homosexual, and the most sinful person.

Sixth, how will the military address the myriad issues associated with or flowing from homosexual conduct, including well documented medical, health and social problems, and the costs resulting there from? Chaplains will inevitably have to discuss these issues which are well-known in the public. Chaplains are a safe place to vent and as counselors and religious leaders they will have to confront these issues.

When Congress passed § 654 in 1993, it held extensive hearings to examine whether allowing open homosexuals in the military as directed by then President Clinton would undermine or injure unit cohesion and readiness given the military community's unique environment. Congress asked for extensive evaluations by the respective Armed Services in specific areas. For example, the Army Surgeon General and Judge Advocate produced reports describing the serious negative effects and increased costs of allowing open homosexuals to serve in the Army. Those studies highlighted some of the same concerns reflected in the February 2009 "Human Rights Complaint Against the Government of Canada" filed by a group of Canadian homosexuals presenting the following statistics on gay and lesbian Canadians. *See* [www.xtra.ca/BinaryContent/pdf/human rights complaint.pdf](http://www.xtra.ca/BinaryContent/pdf/human%20rights%20complaint.pdf).

Life expectancy of gay/bisexual men in Canada is 20 years less than the average; GLB [Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual] people commit suicide at rates from 2 to 13.9 times more often than average; have smoking rates 1.3 to 3 times higher than average; rates of alcoholism 1.4 to 7 times higher than average; rates of illicit drug use 1.6 to 19 times higher than average; show rates of depression 1.8 to 3 times higher than average; and are at a higher risk for anal and other types of cancer. Gay and bisexual men comprise 76.1% of AIDS cases and 54% of new HIV infections each year, 26 times higher than average.

These are not just readiness issues; they impact chaplains because of the chaplain's role and responsibility as a religious leader and counselor who interacts with his/her congregations and other personnel. Other well known descriptions of the homosexual culture by homosexuals, *e.g.*, Randy Shilts's "And the Band Played On", describe practices and behaviors which are unsanitary or present health risks which have no equivalent among heterosexuals and indicate why these problems are endemic. These topics affect all military personnel as well as their dependents and will inevitably arise in the normal discussions in which chaplains participate, formally or informally, especially given the ability to obtain information from the internet. The current legislation would elevate these behaviors to a protected status, raising the question: How can a chaplain provide advice consistent with his or her obligation to represent their faith group, if asked for advice or counsel by a commander, soldier, or dependent?

The interplay between readiness and chaplain speech and counseling issues can be seen in the interplay between the increased HIV/AIDS and substance abuse rates for homosexuals documented in the literature. To date, neither the Congressional hearings nor DOD's review are examining the impact of repealing the Ban on unit cohesion and readiness, the cited reasons for the original Ban. Yet the HIV/AIDS issue is of great concern to chaplains in combat units and hospitals because they must counsel and encourage soldiers, and battlefield medics, who must treat open wounds.

The many issues arising from the current proposed legislation will not vanish with repealing the Ban, but will remain and undermine our Armed Forces cohesion and unit readiness.

For the Chairman, Dr. George Miller

In His service,

Billy Baugham

Rev. Dr. Billy Baugham

Executive Director

**International Conference of
Evangelical Chaplain Endorsers**

Reviewed by counsel, Arthur Schulcz

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