

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3163

To amend title 10, United States Code, to define the purpose, role, duties, and professional qualification requirements for chaplains in the Armed Forces, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 1, 2025

Mr. SELF (for himself and Mr. LUTTRELL) introduced the following bill;
which was referred to the Committee on Armed Services

A BILL

To amend title 10, United States Code, to define the purpose, role, duties, and professional qualification requirements for chaplains in the Armed Forces, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Military Chaplains Act
5 of 2025”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) Religion and religious liberty have always
2 served an essential role in society, culture, and mili-
3 tary service, making them necessary for good demo-
4 cratic governance and a strong military.

5 (2) George Washington, as a young colonel, rec-
6 ognized the importance of religious practice for his
7 soldiers, repeatedly requesting chaplains for his
8 troops and periodically performing religious duties
9 himself when his superiors refused.

10 (3) When the Continental Congress established
11 the Continental Army, it recommended “all officers
12 and soldiers diligently to attend Divine Service.”

13 (4) John Adams instructed his Secretary of the
14 Navy on the influence of a Navy chaplaincy, stating
15 “I know not whether the commanders of our ships
16 have given much attention to this subject [chap-
17 lains], but in my humble opinion, we shall be very
18 unskillful politicians as well as bad Christians and
19 unwise men if we neglect this important office in our
20 infant Navy.”

21 (5) In 1775, the Continental Congress under-
22 standing the significance of chaplaincy, similarly in-
23 structed its fledgling navy that “commanders of the
24 ships of the Thirteen Colonies are to take care that

1 divine services be performed twice a day on board,
2 and a sermon preached on Sunday.”

3 (6) In 1942, Franklin D. Roosevelt also ac-
4 knowledged the importance of the chaplaincy by
5 vowing to “never fail to provide for the spiritual
6 needs of our officers and men”, and during World
7 War II, President Roosevelt had Bibles printed and
8 provided to troops in the field.

9 (7) Understanding the importance of religion
10 not only to the members of the United States mili-
11 tary, but also to the United States as a whole, the
12 Founders ratified the First Amendment to the
13 United States Constitution in 1791.

14 (8) Being applicable to the Armed Forces the
15 First Amendment states: “Congress shall make no
16 law respecting an establishment of religion, or pro-
17 hibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the
18 freedom of speech, or of the right of the people to
19 peaceably assemble, and to petition the Government
20 from a redress of grievances.”

21 (9) The Supreme Court has stated that there is
22 “no historically sound understanding of the Estab-
23 lishment Clause that begins to make it necessary for
24 government to be hostile to religion.” (Kennedy v.
25 Bremerton School District (2022)).

1 (10) The Supreme Court has further explained
2 that “the Establishment Clause does not include
3 anything like a modified heckler’s veto, in which reli-
4 gious activity can be proscribed based on perceptions
5 or discomfort and that the Clause does not compel
6 the government to purge from the public sphere any-
7 thing an objective observer could reasonably infer
8 endorses or partakes of the religion.” (Kennedy v.
9 Bremerton School District (2022)).

10 (11) The Supreme Court has made clear that
11 chaplains in the Armed Forces do not forfeit their
12 First Amendment rights by virtue of their military
13 service (Parker v. Levy (1974)).

14 (12) The Religious Freedom Restoration Act of
15 1993 (Public Law 103–141; 42 U.S.C. 2000bb et
16 seq.) “applies to all Federal law, and the implemen-
17 tation of that law, whether statutory or otherwise,
18 and whether adopted before or after [November 16,
19 1993]” (section 6 of the Religious Freedom Restora-
20 tion Act of 1993 (Public Law 103–141; 42 U.S.C.
21 2000bb–3)).

22 **SEC. 3. DUTIES, RESPONSIBILITIES, REQUIREMENTS, AND**
23 **PROTECTIONS FOR CHAPLAINS IN THE**
24 **ARMED FORCES.**

25 (a) ARMY.—

1 (1) CHAPLAIN CORPS AND CHIEF OF CHAP-
2 LAINS.—Section 7073 of title 10, United States
3 Code, is amended by adding at the end the fol-
4 lowing:

5 “(c) The Chief of Chaplains shall serve as an adviser
6 to the Secretary of the Army.

7 “(d) The Army Chaplaincy shall provide the following
8 and shall be overseen by the Office of the Chief of Chap-
9 lains:

10 “(1) Advise and assist commanders in dis-
11 charging their responsibilities to provide free exer-
12 cise of religion in military service, pursuant to the
13 First Amendment of the United States Constitution,
14 section 2000bb–1 of title 42, United States Code,
15 and related statutes and policies.

16 “(2) Serve as principal advisers to commanders
17 on all issues concerning religious practices, spiritual
18 readiness, religious provisions and religion’s influ-
19 ence on military operations.

20 “(3) Assist commanders in managing religious
21 affairs, including the accommodation of religious
22 practices and the development of policies and proce-
23 dures related to the free exercise of religion.

1 “(4) Oversee education and training programs
2 concerning the accommodation of religious practices
3 for service members.

4 “(5) Provide guidance on the qualifications and
5 requirements for religious-endorsing organizations
6 submitting candidates for military chaplaincy.

7 “(6) Evaluate requests for the accommodation
8 of religious practices and advise commanders on
9 their approval or denial.

10 “(7) Advise and assist commanders in address-
11 ing crisis and suicide prevention initiatives.”.

12 (2) CHAPLAIN.—Section 7217 of title 10,
13 United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

14 **“§ 7217. Duties, responsibilities, requirements, and**
15 **protections for chaplains in the Army**

16 “(a) DUTIES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND REQUIRE-
17 MENTS.—

18 “(1) A chaplain in the Army shall do the fol-
19 lowing:

20 “(A) Meet the religious requirements and
21 care for the spiritual needs of service members,
22 other authorized persons and their dependents.

23 “(B) Assist Armed Services Commanders
24 by serving as an adviser to all religious accom-
25 modation requests and by providing advice on

1 spiritual readiness, and matters concerning reli-
2 gion, morals, ethics, well-being, and morale.

3 “(C) Have a primary role in providing for
4 the free exercise of religion and other religious
5 requirements associated with the free exercise
6 of religion.

7 “(D) Personally meet the religious require-
8 ments of persons in their assigned military
9 units, potentially in isolated or combat environ-
10 ments.

11 “(E) Conduct religious ministry activities
12 consistent with the tenets of their religious-en-
13 dorsing organizations.

14 “(F) Advise Combatant Commands, com-
15 manding officers, and organizations, as appro-
16 priate, on religion, morals, ethics, well-being,
17 morale, and spiritual readiness in the unit, in-
18 cluding religion’s impact on military operations.

19 “(G) Facilitate meeting the religious needs
20 and requirements for those persons to whom
21 they cannot directly minister.

22 “(H) Maintain confidentiality of privileged
23 communications.

1 “(2) In carrying out subparagraph (G) of para-
2 graph (1), a chaplain in the Army may do the fol-
3 lowing:

4 “(A) Connect the person with a different
5 chaplain, or a chaplain of the person’s faith,
6 who can directly provide for their needs.

7 “(B) Equip the person with the tools or
8 materials necessary to meet their own needs.

9 “(C) Coordinate the appointment of faith
10 group-specific religious lay leaders.

11 “(D) Offer information on how to draw
12 from local, civilian, or other resources.

13 “(3) The tasks of a chaplain in the Army may
14 include, but are not limited to, the following:

15 “(A) Performing rites, rituals, ordinances,
16 and ceremonies.

17 “(B) Visiting workspaces.

18 “(C) Counseling, meeting, advising and
19 praying with individuals or groups.

20 “(D) Providing crisis prevention and re-
21 sponse.

22 “(E) Conducting religious services, cere-
23 monies, and observances (e.g., memorials, wed-
24 dings, retirements, sermons, worship, burials).

1 “(F) Providing spiritual ministrations and
2 activities.

3 “(G) Advising on religious accommodation
4 requests.

5 “(H) Providing religious training and edu-
6 cation.

7 “(b) PROTECTIONS.—

8 “(1) A chaplain’s responsibilities and require-
9 ments, as outlined in subsection (a), must be con-
10 ducted in a manner consistent with the chaplain’s
11 sincerely held religious beliefs and tenets of their re-
12 ligious-endorsing organization.

13 “(2) Chaplains shall have the right to conduct
14 public worship, provide counseling, teach, deliver ser-
15 mons, advise, minister, and offer prayer in accord-
16 ance with the chaplain’s sincerely held religious be-
17 liefs and tenets of their religious-endorsing organiza-
18 tion. These activities must be free from censorship,
19 undue restriction, or fear of retribution.

20 “(3) No member of the Armed Forces may—

21 “(A) require or assign a chaplain to per-
22 form any rite, ritual, ceremony, procedure, ser-
23 mon, speech, or other task or action contrary to
24 the sincerely held religious beliefs of the chap-

1 lain, or to the tenets of their religious-endorsing
2 organization; or

3 “(B) retaliate, discriminate or take any ad-
4 verse personnel action against a chaplain, in-
5 cluding denial of promotion, schooling, training,
6 assignment, or financial recoupment; issuance
7 of letters of reprimand; or any other adverse ac-
8 tions or entries in their record, based on the
9 chaplain’s refusal to comply with a requirement
10 prohibited under subsection (b).

11 “(4) Chaplains must uphold their duty to pro-
12 tect confidential, sacramental, and privileged com-
13 munications, including those recognized under appli-
14 cable laws and policies.

15 “(c) ASSISTANCE BY COMMANDING OFFICERS.—
16 Each officer shall furnish facilities, including necessary
17 transportation, to any chaplain assigned to the command
18 of the officer, to assist the chaplain in performing the du-
19 ties, responsibilities, and requirements of the chaplain.

20 “(d) DEFINITIONS.—For the purposes of this section:

21 “(1) ADVERSE PERSONNEL ACTION.—The term
22 ‘adverse personnel action’ means any action taken
23 against a service member that affects or has the po-
24 tential to affect their current position or career, in-
25 cluding promotion, disciplinary actions, transfers,

1 performance evaluations, pay, benefits, awards,
2 training, relief, removal, separation, discharge, or
3 mental health evaluations.

4 “(2) CENSORSHIP.—The term ‘censorship’
5 means any governmental action taken to suppress or
6 restrict information, ideas, or expression.

7 “(3) CHAPLAIN.—The term ‘chaplain’ means a
8 fully qualified member of the clergy from a religious
9 tradition who—

10 “(A) satisfies the professional qualifica-
11 tions of the chaplain’s religious-endorsing orga-
12 nization and the educational requirements of
13 the Department of Defense and the commis-
14 sioning Armed Service; and

15 “(B) is appointed as both an officer in the
16 Chaplain Corps of the Armed Services and a
17 representative of the chaplain’s religious-endors-
18 ing organization to which the chaplain remains
19 accountable for providing religious ministry to
20 the Armed Services.

21 “(4) CONFIDENTIAL, SACRAMENTAL, AND PRIV-
22 ILEGED COMMUNICATIONS.—The term ‘confidential,
23 sacramental, and privileged communications’ means
24 private communications made during either religious
25 sacraments or religious practice, which are protected

1 from being disclosed unless the individual gives the
2 chaplain express permission.

3 “(5) RELIGIOUS-ENDORSING ORGANIZATION.—
4 The term ‘religious-endorsing organization’ means
5 an entity that—

6 “(A) is organized and functions primarily
7 to perform religious ministries to non-military
8 lay members and meets the requirements of the
9 Department of Defense and the commissioning
10 Armed Service; and

11 “(B) possesses ecclesiastical authority to
12 endorse and withdraw endorsement for chap-
13 lains serving under the authority of such entity
14 to conduct religious observances or ceremonies
15 in a military context.”.

16 (b) NAVY.—

17 (1) CHAPLAIN CORPS AND CHIEF OF CHAP-
18 LAINS.—Section 8082 of title 10, United States
19 Code, is amended by adding at the end the fol-
20 lowing:

21 “(f) The Chief of Chaplains shall serve as an adviser
22 to the Secretary of the Navy.

23 “(g) The Navy Chaplaincy, which also services the
24 Marine Corps and the Coast Guard, shall provide the fol-

1 lowing and shall be overseen by the Office of the Chief
2 of Chaplains:

3 “(1) Advise and assist commanders in dis-
4 charging their responsibilities to provide free exer-
5 cise of religion in military service, pursuant to the
6 First Amendment of the United States Constitution,
7 section 2000bb–1 of title 42, United States Code,
8 and related statutes and policies.

9 “(2) Serve as principal advisers to commanders
10 on all issues concerning religious practices, spiritual
11 readiness, religious provisions and religion’s influ-
12 ence on military operations.

13 “(3) Assist commanders in managing religious
14 affairs, including the accommodation of religious
15 practices and the development of policies and proce-
16 dures related to the free exercise of religion.

17 “(4) Oversee education and training programs
18 concerning the accommodation of religious practices
19 for service members.

20 “(5) Provide guidance on the qualifications and
21 requirements for religious-endorsing organizations
22 submitting candidates for military chaplaincy.

23 “(6) Evaluate requests for the accommodation
24 of religious practices and advise commanders on
25 their approval or denial.

1 “(7) Advise and assist commanders in address-
2 ing crisis and suicide prevention initiatives.”.

3 (2) CHAPLAINS.—Section 8221 of title 10,
4 United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

5 **“§ 8221. Duties, responsibilities, requirements, and**
6 **protections for chaplains in the Navy,**
7 **Marine Corps and Coast Guard**

8 “(a) DUTIES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND REQUIRE-
9 MENTS.—

10 “(1) A chaplain in the Navy, Marine Corps and
11 Coast Guard shall do the following:

12 “(A) Meet the religious requirements and
13 care for the spiritual needs of service members,
14 other authorized persons and their dependents.

15 “(B) Assist Armed Services Commanders
16 by serving as an adviser to all religious accom-
17 modation requests and by providing advice on
18 spiritual readiness, and matters concerning reli-
19 gion, morals, ethics, well-being, and morale.

20 “(C) Have a primary role in providing for
21 the free exercise of religion and other religious
22 requirements associated with the free exercise
23 of religion.

24 “(D) Personally meet the religious require-
25 ments of persons in their assigned military

1 units, potentially in isolated or combat environ-
2 ments.

3 “(E) Conduct religious ministry activities
4 consistent with the tenets of their religious-en-
5 dorsing organizations.

6 “(F) Advise Combatant Commands, com-
7 manding officers, and organizations, as appro-
8 priate, on religion, morals, ethics, well-being,
9 morale, and spiritual readiness in the unit, in-
10 cluding religion’s impact on military operations.

11 “(G) Facilitate meeting the religious needs
12 and requirements for those persons to whom
13 they cannot directly minister.

14 “(H) Maintain confidentiality of privileged
15 communications.

16 “(2) In carrying out subparagraph (G) of para-
17 graph (1), a chaplain in the Navy, Marine Corps
18 and Coast Guard may do the following:

19 “(A) Connect the person with a different
20 chaplain, or a chaplain of the person’s faith,
21 who can directly provide for their needs.

22 “(B) Equip the person with the tools or
23 materials necessary to meet their own needs.

24 “(C) Coordinate the appointment of faith
25 group-specific religious lay leaders.

1 “(D) Offer information on how to draw
2 from local, civilian, or other resources.

3 “(3) The tasks of a chaplain in the Navy, Ma-
4 rine Corps and Coast Guard may include, but are
5 not limited to, the following:

6 “(A) Performing rites, rituals, ordinances,
7 and ceremonies.

8 “(B) Visiting workspaces.

9 “(C) Counseling, meeting, advising and
10 praying with individuals or groups.

11 “(D) Providing crisis prevention and re-
12 sponse.

13 “(E) Conducting religious services, cere-
14 monies, and observances (e.g., memorials, wed-
15 dings, retirements, sermons, worship, burials).

16 “(F) Providing spiritual ministrations and
17 activities.

18 “(G) Advising on religious accommodation
19 requests.

20 “(H) Providing religious training and edu-
21 cation.

22 “(b) PROTECTIONS.—

23 “(1) A chaplain’s responsibilities and require-
24 ments, as outlined in subsection (a), must be con-
25 ducted in a manner consistent with the chaplain’s

1 sincerely held religious beliefs and tenets of their re-
2 ligious-endorsing organization.

3 “(2) Chaplains shall have the right to conduct
4 public worship, provide counseling, teach, deliver ser-
5 mons, advise, minister, and offer prayer in accord-
6 ance with the chaplain’s sincerely held religious be-
7 liefs and tenets of their religious-endorsing organiza-
8 tion. These activities must be free from censorship,
9 undue restriction, or fear of retribution.

10 “(3) No member of the Armed Forces may—

11 “(A) require or assign a chaplain to per-
12 form any rite, ritual, ceremony, procedure, ser-
13 mon, speech, or other task or action contrary to
14 the sincerely held religious beliefs of the chap-
15 lain, or to the tenets of their religious-endorsing
16 organization; or

17 “(B) retaliate, discriminate or take any ad-
18 verse personnel action against a chaplain, in-
19 cluding denial of promotion, schooling, training,
20 assignment, or financial recoupment; issuance
21 of letters of reprimand; or any other adverse ac-
22 tions or entries in their record, based on the
23 chaplain’s refusal to comply with a requirement
24 prohibited under subsection (b).

1 “(4) Chaplains must uphold their duty to pro-
2 tect confidential, sacramental, and privileged com-
3 munications, including those recognized under appli-
4 cable laws and policies.

5 “(c) ASSISTANCE BY COMMANDING OFFICERS.—
6 Each officer shall furnish facilities, including necessary
7 transportation, to any chaplain assigned to the command
8 of the officer, to assist the chaplain in performing the du-
9 ties, responsibilities, and requirements of the chaplain.

10 “(d) DEFINITIONS.—For the purposes of this section:

11 “(1) ADVERSE PERSONNEL ACTION.—The term
12 ‘adverse personnel action’ means any action taken
13 against a service member that affects or has the po-
14 tential to affect their current position or career, in-
15 cluding promotion, disciplinary actions, transfers,
16 performance evaluations, pay, benefits, awards,
17 training, relief, removal, separation, discharge, or
18 mental health evaluations.

19 “(2) CENSORSHIP.—The term ‘censorship’
20 means any governmental action taken to suppress or
21 restrict information, ideas, or expression.

22 “(3) CHAPLAIN.—The term ‘chaplain’ means a
23 fully qualified member of the clergy from a religious
24 tradition who—

1 “(A) satisfies the professional qualifica-
2 tions of the chaplain’s religious-endorsing orga-
3 nization and the educational requirements of
4 the Department of Defense and the commis-
5 sioning Armed Service; and

6 “(B) is appointed as both an officer in the
7 Chaplain Corps of the Armed Services and a
8 representative of the chaplain’s religious-endors-
9 ing organization to which the chaplain remains
10 accountable for providing religious ministry to
11 the Armed Services.

12 “(4) CONFIDENTIAL, SACRAMENTAL, AND PRIV-
13 ILEGED COMMUNICATIONS.—The term ‘confidential,
14 sacramental, and privileged communications’ means
15 private communications made during either religious
16 sacraments or religious practice, which are protected
17 from being disclosed unless the individual gives the
18 chaplain express permission.

19 “(5) RELIGIOUS-ENDORSING ORGANIZATION.—
20 The term ‘religious-endorsing organization’ means
21 an entity that—

22 “(A) is organized and functions primarily
23 to perform religious ministries to non-military
24 lay members and meets the requirements of the

1 Department of Defense and the commissioning
2 Armed Service; and

3 “(B) possesses ecclesiastical authority to
4 endorse and withdraw endorsement for chap-
5 lains serving under the authority of such entity
6 to conduct religious observances or ceremonies
7 in a military context.”.

8 (c) AIR FORCE.—

9 (1) CHAPLAIN CORPS AND CHIEF OF CHAP-
10 LAINS.—Section 9039 of title 10, United States
11 Code, is amended by adding at the end the fol-
12 lowing:

13 “(d) The Chief of Chaplains shall serve as an adviser
14 to the Secretary of the Air Force.

15 “(e) The Air Force Chaplaincy, which also services
16 the Space Force, shall provide the following and shall be
17 overseen by the Office of the Chief of Chaplains:

18 “(1) Advise and assist commanders in dis-
19 charging their responsibilities to provide free exer-
20 cise of religion in military service, pursuant to the
21 First Amendment of the United States Constitution,
22 section 2000bb–1 of title 42, United States Code,
23 and related statutes and policies.

24 “(2) Serve as principal advisers to commanders
25 on all issues concerning religious practices, spiritual

1 readiness, religious provisions and religion’s influ-
2 ence on military operations.

3 “(3) Assist commanders in managing religious
4 affairs, including the accommodation of religious
5 practices and the development of policies and proce-
6 dures related to the free exercise of religion.

7 “(4) Oversee education and training programs
8 concerning the accommodation of religious practices
9 for service members.

10 “(5) Provide guidance on the qualifications and
11 requirements for religious-endorsing organizations
12 submitting candidates for military chaplaincy.

13 “(6) Evaluate requests for the accommodation
14 of religious practices and advise commanders on
15 their approval or denial.

16 “(7) Advise and assist commanders in address-
17 ing crisis and suicide prevention initiatives.”.

18 (2) CHAPLAINS.—Section 9217 of title 10,
19 United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

20 **“§ 9217. Duties, responsibilities, requirements, and**
21 **protections for chaplains in the Air Force**
22 **and Space Force**

23 “(a) DUTIES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND REQUIRE-
24 MENTS.—

1 “(1) A chaplain in the Air Force and Space
2 Force shall do the following:

3 “(A) Meet the religious requirements and
4 care for the spiritual needs of service members,
5 other authorized persons and their dependents.

6 “(B) Assist Armed Services Commanders
7 by serving as an adviser to all religious accom-
8 modation requests and by providing advice on
9 spiritual readiness, and matters concerning reli-
10 gion, morals, ethics, well-being, and morale.

11 “(C) Have a primary role in providing for
12 the free exercise of religion and other religious
13 requirements associated with the free exercise
14 of religion.

15 “(D) Personally meet the religious require-
16 ments of persons in their assigned military
17 units, potentially in isolated or combat environ-
18 ments.

19 “(E) Conduct religious ministry activities
20 consistent with the tenets of their religious-en-
21 dorsing organizations.

22 “(F) Advise Combatant Commands, com-
23 manding officers, and organizations, as appro-
24 priate, on religion, morals, ethics, well-being,

1 morale, and spiritual readiness in the unit, in-
2 cluding religion's impact on military operations.

3 “(G) Facilitate meeting the religious needs
4 and requirements for those persons to whom
5 they cannot directly minister.

6 “(H) Maintain confidentiality of privileged
7 communications.

8 “(2) In carrying out subparagraph (G) of para-
9 graph (1), a chaplain in the Air Force and Space
10 Force may do the following:

11 “(A) Connect the person with a different
12 chaplain, or a chaplain of the person's faith,
13 who can directly provide for their needs.

14 “(B) Equip the person with the tools or
15 materials necessary to meet their own needs.

16 “(C) Coordinate the appointment of faith
17 group-specific religious lay leaders.

18 “(D) Offer information on how to draw
19 from local, civilian, or other resources.

20 “(3) The tasks of a chaplain in the Air Force
21 and Space Force may include, but are not limited to,
22 the following:

23 “(A) Performing rites, rituals, ordinances,
24 and ceremonies.

25 “(B) Visiting workspaces.

1 “(C) Counseling, meeting, advising and
2 praying with individuals or groups.

3 “(D) Providing crisis prevention and re-
4 sponse.

5 “(E) Conducting religious services, cere-
6 monies, and observances (e.g., memorials, wed-
7 dings, retirements, sermons, worship, burials).

8 “(F) Providing spiritual ministrations and
9 activities.

10 “(G) Advising on religious accommodation
11 requests.

12 “(H) Providing religious training and edu-
13 cation.

14 “(b) PROTECTIONS.—

15 “(1) A chaplain’s responsibilities and require-
16 ments, as outlined in subsection (a), must be con-
17 ducted in a manner consistent with the chaplain’s
18 sincerely held religious beliefs and tenets of their re-
19 ligious-endorsing organization.

20 “(2) Chaplains shall have the right to conduct
21 public worship, provide counseling, teach, deliver ser-
22 mons, advise, minister, and offer prayer in accord-
23 ance with the chaplain’s sincerely held religious be-
24 liefs and tenets of their religious-endorsing organiza-

1 tion. These activities must be free from censorship,
2 undue restriction, or fear of retribution.

3 “(3) No member of the Armed Forces may—

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5 form any rite, ritual, ceremony, procedure, ser-
6 mon, speech, or other task or action contrary to
7 the sincerely held religious beliefs of the chap-
8 lain, or to the tenets of their religious-endorsing
9 organization; or

10 “(B) retaliate, discriminate or take any ad-
11 verse personnel action against a chaplain, in-
12 cluding denial of promotion, schooling, training,
13 assignment, or financial recoupment; issuance
14 of letters of reprimand; or any other adverse ac-
15 tions or entries in their record, based on the
16 chaplain’s refusal to comply with a requirement
17 prohibited under subsection (b).

18 “(4) Chaplains must uphold their duty to pro-
19 tect confidential, sacramental, and privileged com-
20 munications, including those recognized under appli-
21 cable laws and policies.

22 “(c) ASSISTANCE BY COMMANDING OFFICERS.—
23 Each officer shall furnish facilities, including necessary
24 transportation, to any chaplain assigned to the command

1 of the officer, to assist the chaplain in performing the du-
2 ties, responsibilities, and requirements of the chaplain.

3 “(d) DEFINITIONS.—For the purposes of this section:

4 “(1) ADVERSE PERSONNEL ACTION.—The term
5 ‘adverse personnel action’ means any action taken
6 against a service member that affects or has the po-
7 tential to affect their current position or career, in-
8 cluding promotion, disciplinary actions, transfers,
9 performance evaluations, pay, benefits, awards,
10 training, relief, removal, separation, discharge, or
11 mental health evaluations.

12 “(2) CENSORSHIP.—The term ‘censorship’
13 means any governmental action taken to suppress or
14 restrict information, ideas, or expression.

15 “(3) CHAPLAIN.—The term ‘chaplain’ means a
16 fully qualified member of the clergy from a religious
17 tradition who—

18 “(A) satisfies the professional qualifica-
19 tions of the chaplain’s religious-endorsing orga-
20 nization and the educational requirements of
21 the Department of Defense and the commis-
22 sioning Armed Service; and

23 “(B) is appointed as both an officer in the
24 Chaplain Corps of the Armed Services and a
25 representative of the chaplain’s religious-endors-

1 ing organization to which the chaplain remains
 2 accountable for providing religious ministry to
 3 the Armed Services.

4 “(4) CONFIDENTIAL, SACRAMENTAL, AND PRIV-
 5 ILEGED COMMUNICATIONS.—The term ‘confidential,
 6 sacramental, and privileged communications’ means
 7 private communications made during either religious
 8 sacraments or religious practice, which are protected
 9 from being disclosed unless the individual gives the
 10 chaplain express permission.

11 “(5) RELIGIOUS-ENDORSING ORGANIZATION.—
 12 The term ‘religious-endorsing organization’ means
 13 an entity that—

14 “(A) is organized and functions primarily
 15 to perform religious ministries to non-military
 16 lay members and meets the requirements of the
 17 Department of Defense and the commissioning
 18 Armed Service; and

19 “(B) possesses ecclesiastical authority to
 20 endorse and withdraw endorsement for chap-
 21 lains serving under the authority of such entity
 22 to conduct religious observances or ceremonies
 23 in a military context.”.

24 (d) EFFECT OF VIOLATIONS.—A member of the
 25 Armed Forces who violates the policy required under sec-

tion 7217(b), 8221(b), or 9217(b) of title 10, United States Code, shall be subject to prosecution under section 934 of such title (article 134 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice). Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this section, the President shall—

(1) prescribe regulations establishing that a violation of section 7217(b), 8221(b), or 9217(b) of title 10, United States Code, constitutes an offense punishable under section 934 of such title (article 134 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice); and

(2) revise the Manual for Court-Martial to include such offenses.

(e) REGULATIONS.—The Secretary of Defense shall issue regulations consistent with this section.

(f) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

(1) EXISTING PROTECTIONS FOR CHAPLAINS.—Section 533 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013 (Public Law 112–239; 10 U.S.C. prec. 1030 note) is amended—

(A) in the section heading, by striking “**AND CHAPLAINS OF SUCH MEMBERS**”;

(B) by striking subsection (b); and

(C) by redesignating subsection (c) as subsection (b).

1 (2) PROFESSIONAL FUNCTIONS OF THE AIR
2 FORCE.—Subsection (h) of section 9063 of title 10,
3 United States Code, is amended by adding “in ac-
4 cordance with section 9217(a)” after “Secretary”.

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