



MILITARY RELIGIOUS FREEDOM
f o u n d a t i o n

20 September 2022

The Honorable Juan Vargas
2244 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: MRFF Demand That You Immediately Reschedule Your Horrifically Insensitive Current Plan To Have “Service Academy Night” on Rosh Hashanah

Dear Representative Vargas:

I am writing to you as the founder and president of the [Military Religious Freedom Foundation](#) (MRFF), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to ensuring that all members of the U.S. Armed Forces fully receive the constitutional guarantee of religious freedom. MRFF currently represents just under 81,000 Active Duty, Reserve, and National Guard U.S. military members as well as Service Academy/ROTC/OCS-OTS cadets and midshipmen, DoD civilians, DoD contractor personnel, intelligence agency personnel, and veterans. The foundation believes the separation of religious considerations from the command-and-control structure of the U.S. military is essential for protecting the rights of all citizens and the United States national security.

MRFF’s mission also necessarily includes the protection of *equal opportunities* for all service members and prospective service members, regardless of their religious beliefs, and it is for this reason that I write to you today.

It has been brought to our attention by your own constituents that you have scheduled your district’s “Service Academy Night” for 26 September 2022, the day of the Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashanah, one of the High Holy Days in Judaism. The 51st Congressional District that you represent is home to over 100,000 Jews, many of whom are Sephardic or Hispanic, and multiple synagogues, including Temple Beth Shalom and Beth Eliyahu Torah Center. A Service Academy Night held on Rosh Hashanah excludes your many Jewish constituents, is insensitive to their religious faith, and goes against the Democratic platform of inclusion and diversity. It also hinders the Department of Defense’s goal of developing a diverse officer corps that reflects the public it services. It is a disservice to your constituents. Obviously, you wouldn’t schedule such an event on Easter or Christmas or any other day of religious significance to Christians.

Applications to the U.S. Federal Service dropped nearly thirty percent over the past year as the military continues to deal with recruitment issues following the pandemic. Congressional Service Academy Information Nights are essential to the recruitment process. These nights allow high school students in the district to meet and talk with commissioned officers of the military and representatives of the five federal service academies. Academy representatives provide students with invaluable information they usually cannot obtain due to their geographic residence.

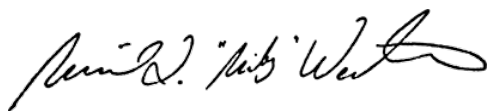
A diverse and inclusive military is vital to the U.S. military and its readiness. The Department of Defense (DoD) states that the Armed Forces seeks a diverse leadership that reflects the public it serves and the force it leads. Further, diverse officer corps is essential to good order and service member morale. In addition, the Democratic party platform is the party of inclusion and diversity. Unfortunately, there is a rise in antisemitism across the country, impacting Jewish life negatively.

I hope that this unfortunate scheduling is a merely a maladroit oversight by your scheduler, but even such an idiotic blunder shows an egregious lack of common respect and decency by your office, which should at the very least consult a calendar to ensure that all events are inclusive and respectful of all faiths and non-faith traditions.

MRFF hereby demands that you reschedule your district's Service Academy Night to a date that does not fall on a Jewish holy day or a holy day for any other faith. If you fail to do so after having received this letter, you are knowingly denying the equal opportunity for your constituents of the Jewish faith who are considering a military career and establishing an unfair advantage being offered to non-Jews.

I look forward to your timely announcement of the immediate rescheduling of "Service Academy Night" to allow your observant Jewish constituents to attend and participate.

Sincerely,



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Founder and President
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U.S. Air Force Academy Honor Graduate, Class of 1977
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