



June 26, 2023

**California Council of Churches/IMPACT Public Policy Advocate
Elizabeth Sholes Rebukes House Armed Services Committee's Legislation
Banning Department of Defense Personnel's Communication With MRFF**

As a long-time public policy advocate, I like to think little can shock me. I've pretty much seen it all over two decades. But today changed all that; I am gobsmacked by an amendment to the new National Defense Authorization Act written by Ohio Congressman Mike Turner (R-Dayton).

We advocate for justice issues in state and federal legislatures.

We serve 21 mainline and liberal Protestant denominations with 1.5 million members. We are a diverse body of faith. We respect that diversity and uphold religious freedom as a core tenant of both our faith and our Constitution. That is why we also support the Military Religious Freedom Foundation and its work to assure total freedom of religion, free from coercion and imposition by any factor or faction within our nation's military.

We have been told repeatedly that the GOP just loves our Constitution and reads it often. However, Turner's amendment outlaws – make ILLEGAL – the use of any tax dollars going to interact with the Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF) that has, quite successfully, sued errant military command and other staff for imposing their views of religion on their subordinates. These views are always fundamentalist, and it is a source of litigation when the command staff imposes them. It's unconstitutional, violates every First Amendment right, and is actionable. MRFF has stood for us all in our quest for religious freedom. MRFF, thus is a thorn in the side of those seeking domination. Not everyone sees MRFF heroically as we do.

Turner has forbidden the use of any tax dollars to contact or deal with MRFF. Outside of the lunacy that it forbids the military from actually DEFENDING itself in legal battles with MRFF, the amendment is a Bill of Attainder – an extra-judicial act to repress and outlaw the freedom and activism of a single group or individual.

Now, please explain to me how this upholds both the restriction on the government favoring a religious view AND how it upholds the Constitutional ban on Bills of Attainder outlawed in Article 1, sections 9 and 10. Making something illegal for ONE entity with no judicial process is absolutely Medieval, and the Founders repudiated the use of it. And yet – here it is. Alive in our current House legislative amendment. Could someone make that make sense?

We support the work MRFF does for all First Amendment rights everywhere in our military. If you are laying down your life for our Constitution, you should be free to exercise its rights fully. That is the foundation of our society and of most faiths: the freedom to follow the bright light of your faith, not be forced into the dark vision of others, whoever they may be.

I urge everyone who values our First Amendment AND Article 1, sections 9 and 10 against selective persecution to call your House Representative.

I daresay many will have no clue what you're talking about, but – keep talking. Educating legislators is as important as getting them to vote as they wish.

MRFF is doing the work of upholding our Constitutional freedoms.

We now need to return the favor of upholding MRFF and its ability to function without an onus. Tell your Senators, too – it's important they vote to remove that illegitimate amendment from the NDAA language. Tell them WHY it has to go.

MRFF works for us and for the Constitution, and no person or organization can be outlawed without a trial. MRFF has not only done nothing wrong, they've done everything right for us, our freedoms, and for upholding the Constitution.

Let's abolish this ridiculous illegal amendment that tries to muzzle MRFF and muzzle us all. Let freedom ring!

Elizabeth Sholes
Public Policy Advocate
California Council of Churches/IMPACT