



SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON

JUN 27 2013

The Honorable Vicky Hartzler
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Hartzler:

Thank you for your May 13, 2013, letter to Secretary Hagel concerning religious liberty in the military services and a meeting with Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF) President Michael Weinstein. Secretary Hagel asked me to respond on his behalf.

Mr. Weinstein requested the meeting to present concerns the MRFF has with respect to religious neutrality in the Air Force. Air Force representatives at the meeting listened to his concerns on April 23, 2013. Attendees included The Judge Advocate General, Deputy Inspector General, Deputy Chief of Chaplains, Director of Air Force Equal Opportunity, along with five Judge Advocate General and Equal Opportunity staff members. Also in attendance were two additional MRFF representatives. No minutes were taken and no records were created as a result of the meeting.

Neither the MRFF nor Mr. Weinstein serves as or has served as an official consultant of the Air Force regarding the Service's free exercise of religion policy. The Air Force free-exercise policy was not changed as a result of the meeting.

I am familiar with both Mr. Weinstein and the MRFF, and I am confident the Air Force professionals who attended the meeting are exceptionally well-suited to determine the appropriate weight and consideration warranted by the concerns Mr. Weinstein raised.

At this time, no additional meetings with Mr. Weinstein or MRFF are planned.

Our religious freedoms are extremely important to the Department, service members and our veterans. General Welsh and I take seriously the responsibility of safeguarding the First Amendment rights and free exercise of religion of our Airmen.

Thank you for your continued commitment and support of our service members and their families. A similar response is being sent to the other signatories to your letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric K. Fanning".

Eric K. Fanning
Acting