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religious liberty

Congress Asks White House to Allow Chaplain Prayer

By David Brody
Capitol Hill Correspondent



[CBN.com](#) –WASHINGTON - More than 160,000 petition signatures are being delivered to the White House today.

It is an effort to get the President to issue an executive order that would allow military chaplains to pray according to their faith.

Navy Chaplain Gordon Klingenschmitt is on a mission. He has come to Capitol Hill to plead his case to lawmakers. He is a Christian, but he has been told by the Navy that he cannot pray in Jesus' name.

Klingenschmitt said, "There is suppression of religious liberty in the military, and I'm concerned about this."

In a memo obtained by CBN News, the chief of navy chaplains said that any chaplain's continued insistence on ending public prayers "in Jesus' name" in all situations, without using discretion or regards to the venue or audience, could reasonably tend to denigrate those with different forms of faith.

Klingenschmitt has challenged that. Now there is a move to kick him out of the military. "I'll be out on the street without a job," Klingenschmitt said. "My family will be evicted from military housing, and I'll have no retirement after 14 years of glowing fitness reports, suddenly terminated from the Navy because I pray in Jesus' name."

That is where lawmakers on Capitol Hill come in. At a news conference on Wednesday, with petitions in hand, they pressed the White House to do something.

Rep.Trent Franks(R-AZ) commented, "I truly believe that the President of the United States, if he fully understood the realities that are present in this circumstance, would respond in an effective and decisive manner."

Dozens of House members have sent a letter to Bush asking him to issue an executive order that would allow all military chaplains to pray in the name of their god.

"He oversees the military as commander-in-chief, and he can say to the Department of Defense, I want the chaplains in this military to have the right to pray as they see fit, based on their religion," said Rep. Walter Jones(R-NC).

Jones said this should not be taken lightly, that this is widespread. There have been hundreds of complaints.

Jones told CBN News, "I've got letters, I have emails, I have telephone calls; it

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is a serious problem."

The congressmen behind this effort see this as a First Amendment issue. But whether the White House will step in is unclear. Jones' staff says the White House has told them that they may address the issue, but no promises of an executive order.

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