

**National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces**  
**Annual Conference 12-15 January 2015**  
*Serving Those Who Serve: Guarding Religious Free Exercise*  
*Interactive Policy Issues Workshop*

**Instructions:** The intent of this workshop is to give you the opportunity to engage with fellow endorsers and process how to deal with current policy issues and identify potential issues that may arise. Nominate one person at your table to briefly share the highlights of your discussion to the larger group at the end of the session. Plan to spend about 15 minutes on each scenario and start with any of the three scenarios. We suggest the following questions to begin with but be creative and let other questions inform your thinking.

1. What are the central issues involved in the scenario?
2. What process would you use to gather facts and better understand the issues? For example, what would you do or not do, and who would you contact?
3. What are the roles of the endorsers, the supervisory chaplains, the Chief of Chaplains, NCMAF, and the commander?
4. At what point would you consider contacting the Chief of Chaplains office? What criteria do you use to determine this threshold?
5. Are the policies/procedures of the three Military Departments different on the topic/subject of the challenge described? How would you find out?
6. Would you consider contacting other Endorsers in order to get their insights on the matter without violating the confidentiality of your chaplain? How would you use NCMAF to help?
7. What guidance would you provide your Chaplain to help him/her work through the challenge? Would that guidance be in writing or verbal, and would you consider it binding?
8. Even if your faith tradition has no problem with the issue being discussed is it important to defend the right of conscience/free exercise of the chaplain? Why?

**Scenario 1:**

A battalion/squadron chaplain is leading a marriage enrichment event for the Protestant congregation he/she pastors at a military chapel. A same-sex couple registers to attend the event. When giving his/her view of marriage from a perspective in accordance with their personal and denominational theology, several couples in attendance challenge the chaplain on respecting and listening to other views of marriage. That evening he/she calls his/her supervisory

chaplain to ask for advice. Their counsel is to give a clear disclaimer statement and maybe even an apology. The chaplain disagrees with the supervisor, and then calls you to ask for your advice. What would you do? (For this scenario, do NOT assume the chaplain's definition of marriage is necessarily a 'traditional' one-man, one-woman concept of marriage).

**Scenario 2:**

One of your endorsed chaplains serves at a Joint-Base environment and has recently been challenged with conflicting policy from the Service they belong to, and the 'lead' Service at the installation. The problem is focused on the use of CTOF funds for unit chaplain events, and the chaplain wonders how to solve the problem without making waves with individuals who supervise them and writes their annual rating/fitness report. He/she calls you to ask for your advice. What makes the situation even more interesting is that you also endorse the supervisory chaplain from the other Service.

**Scenario 3:**

As part of their responsibility while serving as the on-call duty chaplain, one of your chaplains was required to submit a piece for the weekly column about spiritual resilience in the installation/base newspaper. He/she wrote a very helpful article about how their faith helped them through a particularly difficult time and encouraged the reader to consider faith as a critical component of their life. A reader was offended by the column and complained to an advocacy group that subsequently wrote a letter to the installation/base commander who in turn advised the senior installation/base chaplain to counsel your chaplain about being more "generic" when discussing spiritual resilience. Your chaplain was formally counseled by the senior chaplain and assigned to write another column for the following week. Your chaplain called you and complained that if they are required to write the article they should be able to express their faith as a real part of the solution to life's problems as they understand it.