

Faith Digest: No policy changes for military chaplains

February 10, 2011

No policy changes for military chaplains. The pending repeal of the U.S. military's ban on openly gay members will not change policies related to chaplains, the Pentagon stated. "There will be no changes regarding service member exercise of religious beliefs, nor are there any changes to policies concerning the chaplain corps of the military departments and their duties," reads a six-page memo about implementing the repeal of the Don't Ask/Don't Tell policy. It notes that chaplains will continue to be required to "care for all," and their First Amendment freedoms will remain unchanged. "When chaplains are engaged in the performance of religious services, they may not be required to engage in practices contrary to their religious beliefs," it reads. In November, the military issued a comprehensive review of the planned repeal and concluded "special attention" should be given to the chaplains corps because of sharp differences on the issue. But that report also concluded existing rules protecting chaplains' First Amendment rights were "adequate" for the ban's repeal.

More than 6 million U.S. Muslims projected by 2030. The Muslim population in the United States is expected to double over the next 20 years, fueled by immigration and higher-than-average fertility rates, according to a new report from the [Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life](#). The number of Muslims in the United States is projected to rise from 2.6 million, or 0.8 percent of the U.S. population, to 6.2 million, or 1.7 percent in 2030. That rate of growth would make Muslims about as numerous as Jews or Episcopalians in the United States today. Researchers found nearly two-thirds (64.5 percent) of Muslim Americans are immigrants, while 35.5 percent were born in the United States—a figure projected to rise to almost

45 percent by 2030.

Judge upholds law preventing guns in churches. A federal judge has dismissed a lawsuit by gun rights advocates who claimed a Georgia law prohibiting weapons in a house of worship was unconstitutional. GeorgiaCarry.org, an organization that supports gun owners' rights, and two of its members filed suit against state officials saying the law placed an undue burden on them. However, Judge Ashley Royal of the U.S. District Court in Macon, Ga., said any burden on worship attendance was "tangential" because the law requires that people not carry the weapon in services, leave it in their cars or surrender it temporarily to security officers.

Russian Orthodox leader urges dress code. A [Russian Orthodox](#) archbishop has called for an official dress code to encourage propriety after previously suggesting provocatively dressed women provoke immorality and violence. "Vulgar external appearance and vulgar behavior is a straight path to misery," Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin said in an open letter. Chaplin, who is in charge of the Moscow Patriarchate's department on church and society and is known for his provocative statements, was responding to a petition protesting comments he made several weeks earlier when he suggested immodestly dressed women invite rape.

—*Compiled from Religion News Service*