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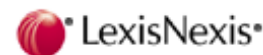
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## Virginia Police Chaplains Quit Over New Prayer Policy

**Posted:** Friday, September 26, 2008**Updated:** September 26th, 2008 11:49 AM GMT-05:00
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**GARY EMERLING***The Washington Times*

At least six of the Virginia State Police's 17 chaplains have resigned following a request they offer only "nondenominational" prayers during department-sanctioned public events and ceremonies, police said Wednesday.



The request was made by state police Superintendent Col. W. Steven Flaherty earlier this month and has been decried by Virginia House Republicans as a violation of the First Amendment and an attack on Christianity. One Republican delegate said chaplains were told they could not invoke the name of Jesus, but a state police spokeswoman denied the assertion.

To "require those troopers to disregard their own faith while serving violates their First Amendment rights and prevents them from serving effectively as chaplains," said House Majority Leader H. Morgan Griffith, Salem Republican. "These men had little choice but to resign."

Col. Flaherty asked the chaplains to offer only nondenominational prayers at public events, such as trooper graduations and annual memorial services. He said he was acting in response to a recent 4th Circuit Court of Appeals decision that dealt with sectarian prayers offered at meetings of the Fredericksburg City Council.

He said chaplains whose beliefs conflict with the request could opt out of participating in such events. Col. Flaherty also said chaplains officiating at funeral ceremonies or counseling individual employees and their families were not bound by the request.

State police chaplains are sworn department personnel who are on duty and paid while performing in that capacity.

"This is not a forced situation," state police spokeswoman Corinne Geller said. "For those who are uncomfortable with that, we wouldn't put them in that position."

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However, Delegate Charles W. "Bill" Carrico Sr., a former state trooper, said he has spoken with some of the chaplains, who said the colonel's request was not put in writing and was treated as an order.

The chaplains were told that "they cannot reference the name of Jesus Christ," said Mr. Carrico, Grayson Republican. "That's against their beliefs and against the dictates of their conscience."

But Ms. Geller, who was not at the meeting, insisted that Col. Flaherty "never once came out and said you cannot invoke the name of Jesus Christ or anything."

The issue of whether chaplains can pray in Jesus' name is not new.

In late 2005, Navy Lt. Gordon Klingenschmitt, an evangelical Protestant chaplain, staged a hunger strike in front of the White House to protest the Navy's policies of encouraging generic, nonsectarian prayers in public settings in place of petitions in the name of Jesus.

He was later court-martialed for appearing in uniform at what the Navy deemed a political protest and eventually discharged.

The controversy spurred several branches of the military to revise their guidelines on what chaplains can and cannot do. The Air Force, for instance, said it would not require its chaplains to offer nonsectarian prayers.

Ms. Geller said the colonel did not consult with Gov. Tim Kaine, Democrat, before issuing the request. She said the decision was "an internal matter" and "exclusively that of Colonel Flaherty."

Kaine spokesman Gordon Hickey also said the governor was not involved in the decision, but thinks it's "a reasonable action" because it allows denominational services for private events such as funerals.

"The governor has every confidence that Colonel Flaherty will direct the chaplains and all state troopers to adhere to the law," Mr. Hickey said.

He also criticized Mr. Griffith for what he termed a "political attack" on the faith of Mr. Kaine, a Catholic.

Mr. Griffith on Wednesday blamed the Kaine administration for "prohibiting the troopers from referencing Jesus Christ in public prayers."

"The last time I checked, the Catholic Church was in favor of Jesus Christ," he said.

Mr. Carrico and Mr. Griffith have pledged to work to reverse Col. Flaherty's decision. Mr. Carrico said he plans this week to begin an online petition and Web site, [www.injesusname ipray.com](http://www.injesusnameipray.com).

Both lawmakers also said they are prepared to introduce legislation to reverse the decision when the General Assembly convenes in January.

"If the problem resolves itself, you might need to do protective legislation for the future," Mr. Griffith said. "We'll have to see how it plays out."

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## Comments

Posted by **Chompers**

(09/26/08 - 02:20 PM)

**Political correctness run amok.**

Posted by **VIRGINIAN**

(09/26/08 - 03:32 PM)

**Virginia is currently suffering through a leftist socialist governor who wants to please the vocal few at the expense of many. The Colonel of the State Police serves at his pleasure and can be removed by the governor. I suspect Gov Kaine had a large part of this liberal assault on our religious freedoms. Strange part is Kaine made a big deal about his Christian views when he was running for office ( google is bio) Luckily the Governor of Va cannot succeed himself so good by a good riddance in 2010**

Posted by **Rick in Tx**

(09/26/08 - 10:25 PM)

### **Christ is Disappearing**

**People what is this country coming to!! Now you have top officials in law enforcement taking the loads name out of prayer. I don't care if it came from the governor or the head of the Virginia Highway Patrol. Wrong is Wrong and if did come from the governor, then Col. Flaherty is nothing more than a "puppet". If I were Flaherty, I would step down before I took the stand against the loads name in prayer. That's what's wrong with our country today, lack of prayer and not acknowledg our flag. Everyone is worried about pissing someone off or hurt their feelings. Our contry is going to hell in a hand basket and people are forgetting what the American Flag and prayer stand for and mean. I don't know of many LOE's that at some point hasn't prayed or asked God to watch over them. Next thing you know the two D\_ \_ k H\_ \_ d's laying down these rules will tell officers they can't wear a St. Michael Necklice to work. By the way, anytime someone says**

**something a superior may have said but wasn't put in writing is because they know it's wrong and is going to get there ass in a sling.**

**Posted by Chas in dayton**

**(09/26/08 - 11:57 PM)**

### **prayer**

**It is commonly asserted that all religions are the same. In a sense this is true, however the distinction between the Lord Jesus Christ and religious leaders of the worlds religions, is that Jesus Christ in the supreme act of love offered himself in our place by dying for our sins and rising from the dead the third day. Faith in his atonement is what saves. No leader of any other religion offered himself for man. Since Christ is the only true Lord as he dealt with the sin issue of all men and rose from the dead, the Chaplains were certainly right to insist they pray in Jesus name since he is the only true Lord. Brass has no business telling anyone how to pray anyway.**

**Posted by John G. in Pennsylvania**

**(09/27/08 - 05:33 AM)**

**So, with Virginia State Police in a 600 trooper hole, Christians should only apply? People, not all of us are Christian, and many object to being forced to participate in practices that promote, or single out a single deity or thing as superior and 'must' be only worshiped. No where in the directive does it state that these people can practice or declare their faith in private affairs and counseling. From the statements so far, it seems that only a Christian can be employed in government/police departments. Why is that?**

**Posted by Tom in Nashville**

**(09/27/08 - 10:05 AM)**

### **Theological Potholes**

**John G., this isn't an issue about non-Christians being forced to pray. It is about Christians being told HOW to pray. It is an issue about ordained clergy being asked to forget (or at least skip over) the source and reason for their faith. Christians tend to take the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ rather seriously. So, from a Christian worldview, all that we do is through the lens of specific faith, not a broad nondescript imitation of religion. It seems that modern religious pluralism is what they're after (like those stupid "Coexist" bumper stickers). The problem is, to Christians, Jesus isn't optional or pluralistic. To ask an ordained clergyman to not mention Jesus and not offer prayer through the savior flies in the face of all he or she stands for, and in good conscience, they SHOULD step down. I think this is ever more the case for evangelicals whose concept of salvation is very personal and active. Christian chaplains are in service to God, and called to service by Christ. If they want generic, so-called "non-denominational" (whatever the hell that means) prayers, ask someone who isn't Christian to offer them. Better yet, just give one of those insipid nonsensical "moments of silence" where we can contemplate our navels and offer thanksgiving to ourselves for being such swell, self-created people without any need for redemption or God.**

Posted by RAM

(09/27/08 - 09:52 PM)

### **Here's a Thought**

Tom, you are so right in what you said. Tom G. here is a thought for you and wother that doesn't like Christ name used in prayer. Let the Men of the cloth do their job and speak to Christ as they do. Fo those that don't believe or want to hear Jesus Christ name used in prayer, ket them step back from the service that is being offered at the time. A person can step away with respect and not say anything. After all, if someone was doing a prayer service I didn't agree with, I would still respect their rights, I would just back off and keep my mouth shut. Don't push your prayer and waut you believe on me and I don't push prayer or what I believe on you. Let each person live his and her life but don't gag people of worship just because it isn't what you believe or want.

Posted by rn in ny

(09/28/08 - 04:05 AM)

### **Re: herse's a thought**

Ram, We should not have to remove ourselves form a work related meeting of any kind because of its religious content. I have been made very uncomfortable by senior/commanding officers pushing this agenda onto the troops. It has no place at work. We are not all of the same faith or beliefs, leave it at home. To Rick in TX, I am a non-believer, and have never once asked for any supreme being for help. I do get annoyed when I hear people say there are no Atheists in fox holes. I am one who served there as well. I don't walk around espousing of the benefits of my beliefs, please stop trying to evangelize me at every opportunity, especially at my place of business.

Posted by G

(09/28/08 - 08:25 PM)

To Rick in TX, in 1985, Time Magazine ran an article about an Army Company that fought in Vietnam in 1975 and talk to the veterans of that unit 10 years. One of the vets stated that he lost in his faith in God after what he saw in Vietnam, and he did not want to be told that there was a God that care. Frankly, I get tired of people who preach their faith on Sunday or any other day and then have no hesitation to stab their neighbors and fellow workers in the back on Monday and on the rest of the other days. I sometimes wonder whose side God is really on when he or she lets the bad people get away with doing unjust for a long time and the good persons have their lives and careers wrecked; whereby, the good people have nothing to live for and have every reason to take their own lives. In the movie Breaker Morant, Morant told the military priest that he was a pagan. His fellow solider, Peter Hancock asks Morant what is a pagan. Morant said that a pagan is a person who doesn't believe that there is a God administrating justice equally all over the world. Hancock then look to the priest and stated that he was a pagan as well.



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