

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

December 9, 2019

The Honorable Mark T. Esper  
Secretary of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Esper,

We write to you today to express our grave concerns about a recent decision by the Department of the Army to reverse its longstanding practice of allowing biblical references on Army-licensed products, including replica dog tags.

During the War on Terror, many soldiers have found hope and inspiration by carrying the simple reminder of their faith and service to our nation in the form of dog tags with biblical verses or references printed on them. Since 2002, the company Shields of Strength (SoS) has provided many of these products to service members and they have grown exponentially in popularity. In 2003, the Department of Defense formalized their relationship with SoS and began selling their products in Army and Air Force Exchanges. In 2012, the Army granted SoS a license to feature Army trademarks on its products and has since provided these products to service members all over the world.

Unfortunately, after the Army received a threatening letter from an atheist group bent on removing any form of faith in the military, they caved and told SoS to remove all biblical references from their products immediately. By doing so they have unconstitutionally discriminated against service members and created a hostility toward religion within the Army.

The Constitution expressly prohibits the establishment of religion to include the disfavoring of certain religious views. Additionally, the First Amendment's Free Exercise Clause protects both individuals and private entities such as SoS. To be clear, no one was forced to buy, wear, or carry any of these products. It was solely based on an individual's choice to carry a simple yet powerful reminder of their faith.

We understand that, above all else, you value the welfare of our men and women in uniform. Spiritual health is an important aspect of their overall wellbeing, and protecting the free exercise of religion is a critical pillar upon which our nation was founded - a right that generations have fought, and died, to uphold.

We believe that each service member should have the ability to choose to engage or not to engage in such a simple act as carrying a faith based product. We urge you to investigate this matter, reverse the Army's decision, and continue to protect the religious freedom of our men and women in uniform.

Sincerely,



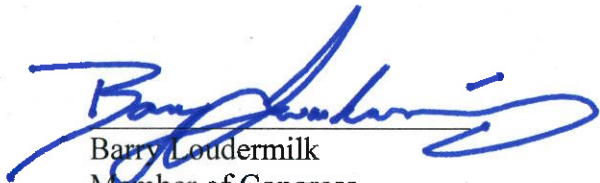
Richard Hudson  
Member of Congress



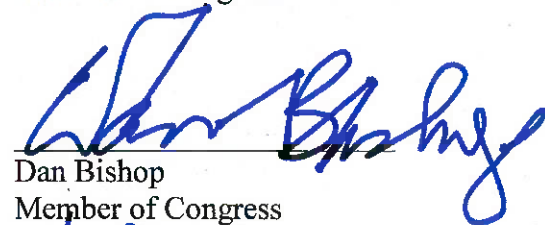
John Moolenaar  
Member of Congress



Vicky Hartzler  
Member of Congress




Barry Loudermilk  
Member of Congress



Dan Bishop  
Member of Congress



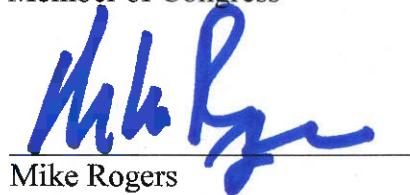
Mark Green  
Member of Congress



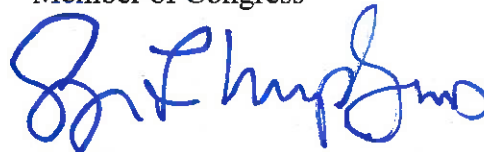
Trent Kelly  
Member of Congress



Doug Collins  
Member of Congress



Mike Rogers  
Member of Congress



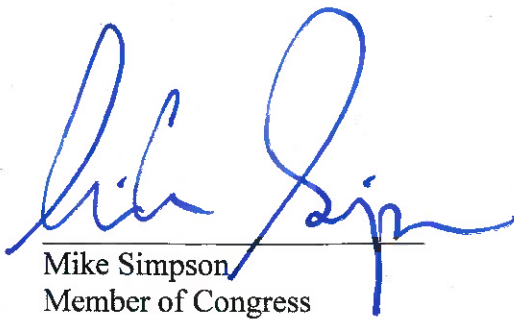
Greg Murphy  
Member of Congress




Mark Walker  
Member of Congress



Jodey Arrington  
Member of Congress



Mike Simpson  
Member of Congress



Russ Fulcher  
Member of Congress



Ted Budd  
Member of Congress

CC: The Honorable Ryan D. McCarthy, Secretary of the Army  
Paul Jensen, Director, Army Trademark Licensing Program