Obama's Politics About Government Shutdown

by Phyllis Schlafly

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Americans were shocked by headlines like, "Priests Face Arrest for Holding Mass During Shutdown." News accounts reported that Catholic priests were warned that they are not permitted to minister on base during the shutdown and they risk being arrested if they attempt to do so.

Since they are unpaid volunteers, this was not caused by a shutdown of military funds. Priests were warned that they risked arrest and military discipline if, without pay, they simply walked onto the base property to perform a chaplain's regular duties.

Congress quickly responded with a nonbinding **resolution** to reinstate furloughed chaplains on a volunteer basis. The House voted **400 to 1** and the Senate passed a similar resolution. Barack Obama didn't have his fingerprints on that order, but since his views about banning any public reference to Christianity are well known, the military (and others) want to be in sync with the Chief. Likewise, the ACLU and atheist organizations know they won't suffer any legal opposition from the Obama Administration when they file their anti-religion lawsuits.

For example, the ACLU and the Freedom From Religion Foundation sued a little school district in Jackson City, Ohio, to force the school to take a picture of Jesus off a school wall. The picture was one of 23 famous historical figures displayed in small frames on a school wall ever since 1947.

The school agreed to take down the picture of Jesus, but that's not the end of it. The school now is required to pay the ACLU $80,000 for its attorneys' fees plus $15,000 to reward five anonymous plaintiffs The school settled and agreed to pay these amounts because it couldn't afford any more legal expenses to defend itself.

In another example of the anti-religious push going on in our military, a U.S. Air Force chaplain, Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth Reyes, posted a column in the Chaplain's Corner section of his base's website entitled, "No Atheists in Foxholes: Chaplains Gave All in World War II." An outfit called the Military Religious Freedom Foundation sent an irate letter to the base commander, claiming that some airmen, who remained anonymous, had complained.

Col. Reyes was ordered to remove the column, but that didn't satisfy the anti-religion group. It demanded that he be punished.

This so-called Religious Freedom group took particular offense at the title, "No Atheists in Foxholes," calling it a "bigoted, religious supremacist phrase." They called the rest of the column "faith-based hate" and an "anti-secular diatribe."

Col. Reyes's column was actually an innocuous message. He summarized the World War II origins of the "no atheists in foxholes" phrase and then commented that faith could be religious or secular.

There was no mention of atheists outside of the historical phrase or of any particular religious group. The column was really very inclusive with no implication that faith has to be in any particular God, implying that everyone has faith in something.

If such a broad-minded, all-inclusive message is a problem, we have to wonder what has happened to our First Amendment right of "free exercise" of religion? Is Obama trying to eliminate military chaplains?

Incidents like these are building a climate of intimidation and discrimination against Christians in the military. It looks like those who are attacking Col. Reyes are the ones who are spreading a climate of so-called "faith-based" hate.

The harassment of religion in the military may be part of Obama's attempt to make the government shutdown as painful to the public as possible. Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland is partially closed because of the shutdown (causing our troops to do their grocery shopping at more expensive off-base stores), but (surprise, surprise) Andrews Air Force golf course (one of Obama's favorites) remains open, ready for him to play his 36th round of golf this year.

The government shutdown closed the National Mall in Washington, D.C. but, in another example of Obama's politics, it was allowed to be open for an amnesty rally on October 8. George Washington's home at Mount Vernon is not government property, but the feds closed the parking lot anyway so no one could conveniently visit the house.

The Obama Administration closed Yellowstone National Park. When a group of foreign tourists disembarked from their tour bus in the park to photograph a herd of bison, they were locked inside the Old Faithful Inn and made to feel like criminals under arrest.

It's rather clear that the Obama Administration is trying to select popular landmarks for closure in order to blame people's annoyance on Republicans. One of the silliest closures was a piece of South Dakota highway where it is possible to pull over and see the faces of the great Americans on Mount Rushmore.