

Air Force Officer Denied Position as Chaplain Following Conversion to Judaism Seeks Reinstatement

Following weeks of discrimination, Air Force officials cite no lawful reason for denying position as an Orthodox Jewish Chaplain

Washington, DC—First Liberty Institute today sent a [letter](#) to U.S. Air Force officials demanding that they immediately reinstate First Liberty client, Air Force Chaplain Jeff Montanari. First Liberty attorneys argue Air Force officials discriminated against Montanari when they rejected his application to be a Jewish chaplain following his conversion to Orthodox Judaism. He had previously served as a chaplain endorsed by the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel.

“At the heart of religious liberty is the right to follow the faith of one’s choice,” said Stephanie Taub, Senior Counsel at First Liberty. “These Air Force officials have no legitimate or lawful reason to prevent Chaplain Montanari from continuing to serve his country as a chaplain, as he did with distinction for several years.”

While serving as a chaplain endorsed by the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, Montanari received many awards and accolades including nomination as Headquarters Airman of the Year. After serving as a Foursquare chaplain where he focused on ministry to the Jewish community, Chaplain Montanari requested a non-chaplaincy position as he explored Orthodox Judaism. Despite explaining that he was in the process of changing his religious affiliation, Montanari’s then-commanding officer ordered him back into the chaplaincy under the endorsement of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel. Chaplain Montanari faced severe hostility from his superiors during this time period, including excluding him from chaplain activities, effectively driving him out of the Air Force.

After completing two years of studies required to convert to Orthodox Judaism, Chaplain Montanari recently re-applied as an Orthodox Jewish chaplain to help serve the spiritual needs of Air Force personnel. Despite a pressing need for Jewish chaplains, the Air Force denied his application with no explanation.

To read the demand letter, [click here](#).

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About First Liberty Institute

[First Liberty Institute](#) is a non-profit public interest law firm and the largest legal organization in the nation dedicated exclusively to defending religious freedom for all Americans.

To arrange an interview, contact Chris Freund at media@firstliberty.org or by calling 469-440-7566.