



**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**  
**North Texas Health Care System**

December 27, 2013

In Reply Refer: 549/00

Jeff Mateer  
Liberty Institute  
2001 West Plano Parkway, Suite 1600  
Plano, TX 75075

Dear Mr. Mateer:


In response to your letter of December 24, 2013, the Department of Veterans Affairs also hopes that this dispute can be remedied without resorting to litigation.

We regret that Ms. Chapman was incorrectly informed by a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) employee that VA could not accept a donation of holiday cards with a religious theme on behalf of Veterans. That was an incorrect statement of VA policy. VA North Texas Health Care System accepts religious cards and distributes them to Veterans on a regular basis throughout the year. We understand that Ms. Chapman has been contacted by hospital staff and informed that the donation of cards is welcome.

The Chaplaincy Service is charged with the duty of distribution of donated cards. The Chaplaincy distributes the cards consistent with VA policy as promulgated in Veterans Health Administration Handbook 1111.02. One of their primary responsibilities is to ensure that religion is not imposed on any patient either overtly or subtly. As a practical matter, Chaplaincy Service fulfills that duty by reviewing holiday cards and determining if the cards contain religious material within them and in the event they do, our Chaplains distribute them by asking patients on an individual basis if they will accept a holiday card with religious references.

We submit this is a reasonable balance of the interests of the students to express their religious views, and the interests of patients to choose to participate in a particular religious expression. We regret that a misunderstanding of policy was communicated and we will work towards ensuring no one is told that their religious cards for Veterans are not welcome.

Sincerely,

  
Jeffrey L. Milligan  
Director

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