

Western Conservative Summit Speech Congressman Doug Lamborn

Good Morning Western Conservative Summit!

I want to thank all of today's organizers for inviting me to speak. I want to especially praise the work of Dr. Don Sweeting, President of Colorado Christian University, and Director Jeff Hunt of the Centennial Institute.

These bold Americans are adding to the legacy of the late Senator Bill Armstrong. They are returning CCU to its roots – Christian faith, Constitutional exposition, and the promotion of American values that have made our nation a city upon a hill.

Before I begin, I must take a moment to reflect on the life of Senator Armstrong. Bill Armstrong may be the greatest American Colorado has ever produced. He served our state and this nation exceptionally in both chambers of Congress and as President of Colorado Christian University.

Bill Armstrong's life offers a testament to two profound truths that all of us gathered here know deeply in our hearts:

There is no greater freedom than that which comes from loving God above all things and there is no greater blessing than being born in the United States of America.

It is in Senator Armstrong's memory we gather to defend and protect the vision of our Founders. It was they who articulated, into perpetuity, that religious liberty is given to us by God, not granted to us by Government.

Religious freedom is the foundation upon which all other rights are built. The First Amendment sits atop the Bill of Rights like a sentry in defense of the rest. It is no coincidence that within our First Amendment, religion is listed before any other freedom.

One cannot understand America's Declaration of Independence or Constitution without understanding the worldview within which both were conceived. The Founders understood that we are endowed with rights by our Creator. This same Creator has instituted a governance written into the universe which we call natural law, but which we know as Truth.

Many governments have recognized the importance of freedom of worship. Even the Soviet Union begrudgingly recognized this at one point. But the United States has set itself apart from the world. This radical belief in God-given rights and natural law is what has transformed the American experiment into American exceptionalism.

Since before our nation declared her independence to America's modern warfronts, our military has fought bravely for these exceptional ideals. In fact, through some of the most difficult periods of war came national reawakening to the timeless understanding that our freedom comes from God.

During the Civil War, the Treasury Department began printing "In God We Trust" on currency to declare that this Union was conceived out of the notion that man's God-given rights could not be subjugated by government.

During the Cold War, Charles Edward Bennett, a Democrat Congressman from Florida, successfully persuaded Congress to pass into law that “In God We Trust” be declared the official motto for the country. He and President Eisenhower, former commander of the World War II Allied Forces, understood that America’s faith in God was the ultimate contrast with the atheism of the Soviet Union.

Trusting in God to preserve our liberties is the American way of life that our military defends and protects. Americans of faith understand trusting in God is our only hope.

From John Winthrop to President Donald J. Trump, our leaders have looked to God for His providence in the forging of our American destiny. But as a nation, we cannot ask God for His guidance without the religious freedom to pray it.

As ranking member of the House Armed Services subcommittee on Readiness and co-chair of the House Values Action team, I have been uniquely positioned to perform Congressional oversight of how religious freedom is observed throughout the Department of Defense. I have come here today sound the alarm bell and to call you to action.

Today, the same American warriors fighting the enemies of religious freedom around the world are becoming victimized by the culture war at home. Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines are being targeted by radical leftists, atheists, and socialists who condemn faith, traditional values, and even the name of God. The very right to “enact religion” as it is described in the First

Amendment is at risk for our servicemen. Here are a few examples of what I mean.

Oscar Rodriguez Jr., is a veteran of the United States Air Force who served the nation honorably for over 33 years. His service to America came with great sacrifice. Oscar lost his business when he was called to active duty from the reserves. But he served with gratitude for the nation and those that came before him.

Beyond his uniformed service, Oscar developed a passion for performing a ceremonial flag folding speech. He performed the speech that explains the values our flag represents, including faith in God, over 100 times at military and civic events. His rendition of the speech was so compelling he received a great deal of attention. He even received handwritten praise from California Democrat Congressman John Garamendi for his performance at a California state fair.

In 2016 when Master Sergeant Chuck Roberson asked Oscar Rodriguez to perform the speech at his retirement ceremony, he was happy to do so. Roberson's unit commander however did not approve of a speech that mentioned "God" and he tried to unlawfully prevent Rodriguez from performing.

When he was unable to do so, he sent men to the ceremony in uniform to threaten him.

When Oscar made it clear he intended to speak anyway they assaulted him.

Rodriguez was physically dragged out of the room for daring to utter the word God at an Air Force retirement ceremony. Three years later, his case is still in litigation.

Not only are enlisted servicemen like Oscar being persecuted, chaplains are too. In 2018, Army Chaplain Scott Squires was wronged for upholding the tenants of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Chaplain Squires had served in the Army for over 25 years both as an enlisted soldier and as a commissioned officer in the chaplain corps. Squires was approached by a same-sex couple who wanted to attend a marriage retreat that the Army hosts. Chaplain Squires followed army regulation and the dictates of his church when he informed them that they have a right to go on the retreat, but that he would not be able to facilitate it for them. Rather than accept his offer to find a different facilitator, the couple filed a complaint.

First, Army investigators recommended he be given a verbal slap on the wrist. After Squires' legal counsel stepped in, Army investigators produced a new report recommending Chaplain Squires be court-martialed for dereliction of duty.

After many months of being attacked in the public eye, Chaplain Squires was finally vindicated by the Army. Squires still had to endure a public witch hunt simply for following the rules of his church and the United States Army.

For the radical left, following rules and guidelines that do not conform to their social views is no excuse.

Finally, I want to tell you about my friend US Air Force Colonel Leland Bohannon.

Colonel Bohannon is an American hero. He has flown over 3,300 flight hours and has a record of decorated service in Afghanistan and Iraq. He is also a devout Christian, husband, and father of five.

In 2017, while serving as vice commander of the 2nd Bomb Wing at Barksdale Air Force Base, Colonel Bohannon was approached with routine documentation to sign for the retirement of one of his subordinates. One of the voluntary documents was a certificate of spousal appreciation. It was not mandatory the document be signed at all and Colonel Bohannon felt he personally could not sign it because he does not believe in same-sex marriage. Rather than ignore the document, the Colonel consulted with his military chaplain and JAG Attorneys. He took their advice that he seek a religious accommodation and have his superior sign the document.

Bohannon was then accused of discrimination, passed up for a merit-based promotion, and found guilty of an equal-opportunity violation.

When I learned that another great American was about to be torn down simply for following Jesus Christ, I knew I had to act. I sent a letter to the Secretary of the Air Force with 25 other members of Congress asking her to reverse the Air Force determination and grant Colonel Bohannon an accommodation. Colonel Bohannon appealed the decision as well.

It is unacceptable that leftists could bully the Air Force into punishing a man who had given so much for his country, simply for only being guilty of following the teaching of the Bible.

Then the most important action of all was taken- people of faith came together and prayed.

But God did not listen idly. When the Secretary of the Air Force reversed the Air Force's decision and cleared Colonel Bohannon- God Answered.

So I want to thank Colonel Bohannon who is here today. Thank you for serving the greatest country in human history. Thank you for fighting for my religious freedom. Thank you for enduring this cultural battle with so much grace.

I want to thank all of you who are gathered here today. Please, never shy away from doing your part to defend our God given rights. Remember how much the military is sacrificing to protect them.

Finally, we all must remember, when our religious freedom is under threat, remember the American way- In God We Trust.

When we stand for the freedoms God grants us by exercising our rights in prayer, no evil can stand against us. As the great American Reverend Billy Graham said, "history could be altered and changed again if people went to their knees in believing prayer."

God bless you all, God bless our brave military, God bless the great state of Colorado and God bless the United States of America.

Thank you.