



--For Immediate Release--

June 20, 2012

**THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR LAW & POLICY SUCCESSFULLY DEFENDS
POLICE CHIEF WHOSE CIVIL RIGHTS WERE VIOLATED IN ANOTHER
VETERAN'S ADMINISTRATION ANTI-RELIGIOUS PURGE ATTEMPT.**

San Diego, CA. In late April 2012, Mr. Alvin Pittman, an African-American Messianic Jew, who had exceptionally and honorably served as the Chief of Police at Veterans Administration San Diego Health Care System ("VASDHS") for many years, contacted the National Center for Law & Policy with an urgent request for assistance. VASDHS had improperly suspended Chief Pittman because he had engaged in protected religious speech in the workplace and because he refused to be silenced by the VA.

His alleged "crime" was that he had shared two Proverbs with fellow Christian VA police officers during a routine meeting. After receiving a complaint, the acting Assistant Director at the VA issued a cease and desist "Memorandum of Understanding" to Chief Pittman that indicated he had engaged in behavior that could be considered "harassment" and ordered him to "stop immediately" using all "religious references in the workplace." Mr. Pittman refused to sign this blatantly illegal order but agreed to attend an EEO class. Shortly thereafter, however, Chief Pittman was notified that he was the subject of an Administrative Investigation Board (AIB) inquiry, was banned from his VASDHS office, and was ordered to occupy a small cubicle during the lengthy "investigation." And, in spite of his and his attorney's repeated requests, he was denied access to his office to acquire documents and information that would assist in his defense and exoneration. Later, he was notified that his deputy Chief had replaced him.

NCLP President Dean Broyles agreed to represent Chief Pittman and attended the AIB investigation hearing on May 2, 2012. The NCLP's investigation of the matter, including the inquiries at the hearing, confirmed that Chief Pittman had not violated any applicable or legally enforceable VA policy and that the VA's response was an egregious overreaction to unfounded charges that had been brought against our client. After the AIB hearing, our staff drafted a

demand letter explaining that Chief Pittman had done nothing wrong, that his free exercise of religion and free speech rights had been violated, and demanding that Mr. Pittman be returned to his office immediately pending the outcome of the AIB investigation. Although the VA refused to restore him to his office, the VA director wisely withdrew the (cease and desist) order that Chief Pittman stop using all religious references in the workplace. Chief Pittman was notified earlier this week that he had been completely exonerated of all charges by the Administrative Investigation Board and that he can return to his post immediately.

“The federal workplace is not a religion free zone that may be ‘sanitized’ of all religious expression,” declared NCLP president Dean Broyles. “It is outrageous that the mere recitation of Old Testament wisdom literature to fellow Christians in the workplace would be perversely transformed into a specious charge of ‘religious harassment’ by the VA. Chief Pittman’s religious speech was and is clearly protected by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964¹, the *Guidelines on Religious Exercise and Expression in the Federal Workplace* issued by the Clinton administration, and the VA’s own EEO Policy issued on March 14, 2012. There is no excuse for what happened to Chief Pittman. This case is clearly one of political correctness and religious hostility run amok. Unfortunately, this is not an isolated incident. This case and last year’s Bible ban at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center confirm the fundamental lack of respect for religious freedom that has been repeatedly demonstrated by this administration and is unfortunately trickling down to various branches of our federal government. Our wounded service members who are defending our precious liberties deserve much better than this. We are certainly pleased that Chief Pittman has been cleared of all charges and can return with honor to his post. However, it is horrible that he was treated so poorly by VA and was removed in the first place.” The only remaining issue in this case is a pending EEO investigation initiated by Chief Pittman against VA management for violating his civil rights because of the VA’s illegal cease and desist order and the inappropriate removal of him from his office.

Chief Pittman, who is returning to his post this week, is very pleased with the result. “The National Center for Law and Policy stood by me and encouraged me to not relinquish my faith in Christ in the workplace, to continue to openly share biblical truth, and to not be ashamed but to stand up for the values upon which this great nation was founded,” stated Alvin Pittman.

NCLP attorneys are available immediately for additional comment by individual request.

To reach the NCLP, please contact us via our web site at www.nclplaw.org or via telephone at 760-747-4529.

¹ <http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/statutes/titlevii.cfm>