

PAGAN ADVOCACY PACKET

A Toolkit for Responding to the Pentagon's Removal of Pagan, Wiccan, Heathen, Druidic, and Minority-Faith Religious Affiliation Codes

For Service Members | Clergy | Veterans | Allies

Codes cut	From 211 recognized religious/worldview codes to 31
Removed	All Pagan, Wiccan, Heathen, Druidic, and polytheist designations
What remains	DoD Instruction 1300.17, First Amendment rights, existing worship spaces, VA headstone emblems
Primary risk	Reduced visibility, harder accommodation requests, weakened chaplain support

PART ONE: ADVOCACY PACKET

1. Purpose

This packet equips Pagan service members, clergy, veterans, and allies to take effective action in response to the DoD's removal of Pagan religious affiliation codes. Use it to:

- Advocate for the restoration of Pagan religious codes
- Protect existing worship spaces
- Support Pagan clergy access to installations
- Ensure equal treatment under DoD Instruction 1300.17
- Communicate effectively with Congress, chaplains, and the public

2. Core Message

The Pentagon's removal of Pagan religious affiliation codes is not a symbolic issue — it creates real consequences for thousands of service members. These codes enable chaplains to identify and support troops' religious needs, process accommodation requests, and track demographic data that drives institutional decisions. Their removal reduces visibility, complicates access to care, and undermines the DoD's own commitments to equal religious liberty.

3. Key Facts

- **180+ codes eliminated** — The DoD cut recognized codes from 211 to just 31 — a reduction of over 85%.
- **All Pagan codes removed** — Wiccan, Heathen, Druidic, polytheist, and all other Pagan designations were eliminated entirely.
- **Chaplain support degraded** — Chaplains rely on codes to identify service members' needs and connect them with appropriate care.
- **Accommodations become harder** — Without a recognized code, formal accommodation requests face higher bureaucratic hurdles.

- **Worship spaces not automatically closed** — Existing spaces (e.g., the Pagan grove at Fort Campbell) remain authorized but may become harder to sustain.
- **VA headstone emblems unchanged** — Approved emblems of belief on headstones are unaffected, though administrative confusion may arise.

4. Advocacy Talking Points

Use these points in meetings, emails, letters to Congress, or public comment.

Equal treatment is not optional.

- The DoD cannot privilege some religions while collapsing others into a catch-all 'Other' category.
- This is inconsistent with DoD Instruction 1300.17 and First Amendment protections.

Pagan service members serve in every branch.

- Removing their codes does not eliminate their presence — it makes them invisible in official records.
- Invisible service members are less likely to receive tailored support or have their needs recognized.

Chaplains cannot help troops they cannot identify.

- Religious affiliation codes are not ceremonial — they are operational tools.
- Without them, chaplains lose a primary mechanism for recognizing and responding to religious needs.

This is a readiness issue.

- Service members who feel invisible or unsupported are less likely to trust their chain of command.
- Religious equity contributes directly to morale, cohesion, and retention.

Restoring codes costs nothing.

- This is a straightforward administrative correction with significant human impact.
- No resources, facilities, or personnel changes are required — only updated records.

5. Recommended Actions

1. Submit formal requests through DoD channels to restore Pagan and minority-faith codes.
2. Contact congressional offices using the template provided in Section 6.
3. Build coalitions with interfaith allies: Unitarian Universalists, atheist and humanist groups, Sikhs, Hindus, Jews, and Muslims face similar equity concerns.
4. Encourage Pagan service members to document all accommodation requests and keep copies of all related correspondence.
5. Request meetings with installation chaplains to confirm support procedures, clergy access, and worship space status.
6. Connect with national Pagan organizations to coordinate unified messaging (see Part Two, Section 9).

6. Template: Congressional Outreach

Copy and adapt this letter for your congressional representative or senator.

SUBJECT: *Request for Oversight: Removal of Pagan Religious Affiliation Codes in the U.S. Military*

I am writing to request congressional oversight of the Department of Defense's recent elimination of Pagan, Wiccan, Heathen, Druidic, and other minority-faith religious affiliation codes.

These codes are not administrative formalities. They are the tools chaplains and commanders use to identify the religious needs of their personnel, process accommodation requests, and ensure equal treatment under DoD Instruction 1300.17. Their removal significantly reduces the visibility of thousands of service members and undermines the DoD's stated commitment to religious liberty.

I urge your office to seek clarification from the Department of Defense on the rationale for this decision and to support the immediate restoration of these codes. Equal religious freedom must be guaranteed for all who serve.

[Your name, branch/status, installation or city]

7. Template: Chaplain or Command Outreach

Use this to open a formal dialogue with your installation chaplain or commanding officer.

SUBJECT: *Request for Clarification on Pagan Religious Support Following DoD Code Changes*

I am writing to request clarification on how Pagan service members at this installation will receive religious support following the recent removal of Pagan religious affiliation codes by the Department of Defense.

Specifically, I would like to confirm current procedures for:

- Filing religious accommodation requests
- Accessing Pagan or minority-faith clergy
- Using existing worship spaces (e.g., Pagan groves or designated areas)
- Recording religious preference in official personnel systems

DoD Instruction 1300.17 and applicable service branch policies remain in effect. I am committed to working within established procedures and welcome the opportunity to meet and clarify these matters.

[Your name, rank, unit, contact information]

8. Media Q&A

Prepared responses for reporters, lawmakers, and community partners.

Q: Are Pagan service members banned from serving?

A: No. Pagan service members retain full First Amendment rights and may serve in all branches. However, the removal of official affiliation codes reduces their institutional visibility and makes it harder for chaplains to provide tailored support.

Q: Are Pagan worship spaces being closed?

A: No closures have been announced. Existing spaces — including the Pagan grove at Fort Campbell — remain authorized unless explicitly revoked by a commander. However, sustaining these spaces and obtaining future support may become more difficult without official code recognition.

Q: Are Pagan symbols being removed from VA headstones?

A: No. VA-approved emblems of belief are unaffected by this decision.

Q: Why do codes matter if service members can still practice their faith?

A: Official codes are operational tools. They enable chaplains to identify and reach service members, process accommodation requests, and maintain accurate religious demographic data. Without recognition, Pagan service members lose access to the same personalized institutional support available to members of recognized faiths.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
PRESS STATEMENT

Pagan and Minority-Faith Service Members Call for Restoration of Religious Affiliation Codes

The Department of Defense's recent decision to eliminate more than 180 religious affiliation codes — including every Pagan, Wiccan, Heathen, Druidic, and polytheist designation — represents a significant setback for religious freedom in the United States military.

Although the DoD has characterized this change as administrative, its consequences are substantive. Religious affiliation codes are the essential infrastructure through which chaplains and commanders understand the faith lives of their personnel, process accommodation requests, and fulfill their obligations under DoD Instruction 1300.17. Stripping Pagan and minority-faith service members of these codes does not make them disappear — it makes them invisible to the systems designed to support them.

Existing Pagan worship spaces — including the Pagan grove at Fort Campbell — remain in place, and VA-approved headstone emblems are unaffected. But the absence of official code recognition creates tangible new barriers: to accessing civilian clergy, securing religious accommodations, and sustaining the worship infrastructure that Pagan troops have built through decades of advocacy and service.

Pagan Americans have served honorably in every branch of the military and in every major conflict in this nation's history. They deserve the same institutional recognition and support afforded to every other faith community.

We call on the Department of Defense to restore Pagan and minority-faith religious affiliation codes immediately, and to reaffirm, in both policy and practice, its commitment to equal religious freedom for all who serve.

For interviews, statements, or coordination with interfaith partners, contact:
[Insert contact information]

PART TWO: PAGAN CLERGY BRIEFING

Responding to the Pentagon’s Removal of Pagan Religious Affiliation Codes

1. Purpose of This Briefing

This briefing equips Pagan clergy — both civilian and military — to understand the impact of the DoD’s code removal and to take effective protective action. Use it to:

- Understand how the removal affects Pagan service members in practice
- Protect the rights of troops under your pastoral care
- Ensure continued access to worship spaces and religious rituals
- Navigate chaplain systems under the new administrative framework
- Advocate for the restoration of Pagan codes at the institutional level

2. What Changed — and What Did Not

WHAT CHANGED	WHAT DID NOT CHANGE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Pagan, Wiccan, Heathen, Druidic, and polytheist codes have been removed. • The DoD now recognizes 31 codes, down from 211. • Chaplains lack an official mechanism to identify Pagan service members. • Administrative pathways for accommodation requests are more complex. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pagan service members retain full First Amendment rights. • DoD Instruction 1300.17 remains in force. • Existing worship spaces (e.g., Fort Campbell grove) remain authorized absent explicit revocation. • VA headstone emblems of belief are fully approved and unaffected.

3. Operational Impacts for Clergy

A. Reduced Visibility of Pagan Service Members

Without affiliation codes, chaplains have no standardized way to identify Pagan personnel. This limits opportunities for pastoral care, ritual support, accommodation guidance, and community building. Clergy must take a more proactive role in making themselves and their service members known within installation support systems.

B. Increased Burden of Proof for Accommodations

Service members requesting religious accommodations may face additional scrutiny. Clergy should be prepared to provide supporting documentation on short notice, including:

- Letters confirming the service member’s religious identity and tradition
- Liturgical or holy day calendars
- Lists of ritual tools and requirements
- Brief descriptions of tradition, practice, and clergy role

C. Harder Pathways for Pagan Chaplains

The removal of codes does not prohibit Pagan chaplains, but it weakens the demographic justification for their representation, may complicate endorsement pathways, and makes applications more susceptible to administrative rejection. Affected clergy should document every step of the process carefully.

D. Increased Gatekeeping Risk

Some chaplains may interpret the removal of codes as a signal that Paganism is less institutionally legitimate. Clergy should be equipped to counter this interpretation directly with policy citations. DoD Instruction 1300.17 and applicable service regulations have not changed, and no chaplain has authority to treat a service member's faith as less valid on the basis of code removal.

4. Immediate Actions for Pagan Clergy

Issue Letters of Endorsement and Support

Prepare a standard letter for service members under your pastoral care. It should include the member's religious identity, a description of their tradition, a list of holy days, and any ritual tools or requirements. Provide this proactively — do not wait for a formal accommodation request to trigger documentation.

Establish Direct Lines with Installation Chaplains

Request in-person or written meetings with installation chaplains to clarify how Pagan needs will be tracked, confirm procedures for clergy visits, and reaffirm the status of existing worship spaces. Establishing a positive working relationship now reduces friction later.

Document Everything

Keep written records of all accommodation requests, denials or delays, communications with chaplains or command, and any issues related to worship space access. Documentation is essential for escalation through Equal Opportunity channels or legal advocacy.

Build Interfaith Coalitions

Unitarian Universalists, atheists, humanists, Sikhs, Hindus, Buddhists, and other minority-faith communities face comparable equity challenges. Coordinating across traditions increases institutional pressure and broadens the advocacy base.

5. Guidance for Service Members

Advise Pagan troops under your care to take the following steps:

- Submit religious preference in writing to their chain of command and retain a copy
- File accommodation requests early — before holy days or ritual needs arise
- Keep copies of all paperwork related to religious practice and accommodation
- Report any discrimination or unequal treatment through Equal Opportunity channels
- Connect with Pagan military networks for peer support and shared resources

6. Advocacy Strategy for Clergy

Contact Congressional Offices

As clergy, your voice carries particular weight with elected officials. Contact your representatives directly and use your title and role when requesting oversight. Lawmakers respond to faith leaders. Use the congressional template in Part One, Section 6, adapted to your position.

Submit Formal Requests to the DoD

Request the restoration of Pagan codes, clarification of support procedures under the current framework, and written assurance of equal treatment. Written requests create a formal record and demonstrate organized advocacy.

Issue Public Statements

Visibility matters. Public statements from recognized Pagan clergy help counter misinformation, establish legitimacy in the public record, and apply pressure for policy reversal. Coordinate messaging with national organizations for maximum impact.

Coordinate with National Pagan Organizations

Unified advocacy is more powerful than individual action. Coordinate with:

- Covenant of the Goddess
- Circle Sanctuary
- The Troth
- Ár nDraíocht Féin (ADF)
- Sacred Well Congregation

7. Key Policy Citations

Reference these documents when engaging chaplains, commanders, or legal channels. All remain in effect.

Policy	Relevance
DoD Instruction 1300.17	Religious liberty in the military — the primary governing policy
Army Regulation 600-20	Equal opportunity — covers religious discrimination and accommodation
Air Force Instruction 52-201	Religious freedom and chaplain services
Navy Policy on Religious Ministry	Equivalent guidance for Navy/Marine Corps personnel
VA Emblems of Belief List	Confirms Pagan symbols remain approved for headstones

8. Messaging Points for Clergy

Use these statements in meetings, letters, public remarks, and media engagements.

- Pagan service members have served honorably in every branch and every major conflict in American history.
- Removing codes from the system does not remove our people from the ranks.
- Chaplains cannot provide meaningful support to troops they cannot identify.
- Equal religious liberty is not a preference — it is a constitutional and regulatory obligation.
- Restoring these codes is a simple administrative correction. The human cost of inaction is not simple at all.

9. Closing Guidance

Pagan clergy now occupy a critical position in this advocacy effort. Your documentation, pastoral authority, and public voice can directly determine whether the Department of Defense restores official recognition for the Pagan service members who have earned it.

Do not wait for the institution to come to you. Make contact, build relationships, document everything, and advocate loudly and in coordination. The tools are in this packet. The moment is now.