

## Focus on Religious Freedom

*"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." 1st Amendment of U.S. Constitution*

### In the News: Religious Exemptions to Covid-19 Vax Still Being Denied

New York - New York Police Department Officer Marjel Kola, is suing the department after they denied him a religious exemption and fired him on June 17, 2022. Kola is a native of Albania, a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and has been a transit cop for over 4 years. He received the "Cop of the Month" award in June 2021.

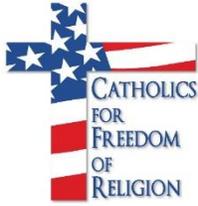
When the Covid vaccine became mandatory, Kola applied for a religious exemption and was immediately denied. "I believe in God and put the trust in God. Why should I put something in my body that I don't trust?" he said. <sup>(1)</sup> He appealed and submitted a letter from his pastor stating that Kola has been an elder of the church since 2017 and follows its teachings. Still, he was terminated in June.

Air Force - Air Force officials were ordered on July 27, 2022, not to discipline airmen who are seeking religious exemptions to the military's Covid vaccine mandate. U.S. District Judge Matthew McFarland asked the military to make its case as to why he shouldn't enter a preliminary injunction, which is a longer-lasting measure. "Defendants fail to raise any persuasive arguments," Judge McFarland said. The small number of religious exemptions granted is "farical". The Air Force "has effectively stacked the deck against service members seeking religious exemptions." <sup>(2)</sup>

Chicago - The "first class wide lawsuit for health care workers over a Covid shot mandate" in the United States was settled for over \$10.3 million on July 29, 2022, Liberty Council reported.<sup>(3)</sup> The lawsuit was against NorthShore University Health System, located in the suburbs of Chicago, on behalf of current and former workers who objected to its Covid shot mandate on religious grounds. They refused the shot due to its association with aborted fetal cells, according to Liberty Counsel. 523 workers had requested and were denied a religious exemption or accommodation. NorthShore had approved the request from one person.

(theepochtimes.com, 8/8/22(1); therayfield.com, 8/8/22; truthpress.com, 7/29/22(2); younews.com, 7/28/22; legitgov.org, 7/30/22; ncregister.com, 7/31/22(3); chicagotribune.com, 8/2/22)

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