

# THE UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

---

## PRESS RELEASE

January 24, 2014

## Contact:

Lenore Ostrowsky  
Acting Chief, Public Affairs Unit  
(202) 376-8591

## **U.S. COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS COMMENTS ON POSITIVE CHANGE IN DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE POLICY ON RELIGIOUS RIGHTS IN THE MILITARY**

**WASHINGTON, DC:** The United States Commission on Civil Rights views as positive the decision by the U. S. Department of Defense to revise its Instruction on the Accommodation of Religious Practices Within the Military Services.

By majority vote, the Commission issued a [letter](#) on December 9, 2013 to the Defense Department expressing concern over the possible deleterious effect of restrictive regulations on the religious rights and participation of Sikhs and other affected religious group members who wish to serve in the defense of the country.

Commission Chairman Martin R. Castro stated, "The change in policy is an important step in the right direction to better accommodate the civil and religious rights of all who serve or want to serve in our armed forces, and brings uniformity to the various service branches. However, we must wait and see whether the revised policy as it is applied addresses the Commission's concerns about the possible unnecessary exclusion of Sikh Americans and Americans of other religious faiths from military service based on their religious beliefs as manifested in their dress and grooming. The Commission is proud to have contributed its views to this important debate on the issue."

\*\*\*\*\*

*The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is an independent, bipartisan agency charged with monitoring federal civil rights enforcement. Members include Chairman Martin R. Castro and Commissioners Roberta Achtenberg, Gail Heriot, Peter Kirsanow, David Kladney, and Michael Yaki. Commission meetings and briefings are open to the general public. The Commission's website is <http://www.usccr.gov>.*

*1331 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 1150, Washington, DC 20425*

*Telephone: (202) 376-7700*