

Statement
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Good morning. I'm Doctor Donald Thompson, and I practice family medicine and preventive medicine. My right of conscience has an impact far beyond my own practice. When I am required to violate my ethical convictions, my patients are deprived of their freedom of choice to select a physician who cares for them according to their convictions.

I recently retired after a 27 year career in the military. I willingly took an oath to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States. That oath led to extensive life-threatening service in Iraq and Afghanistan. Little did I know that the most basic constitutional liberties for which I fought – free exercise of religious expression and freedom of speech - would come under attack by the very same elected leaders who swore, as I did, to protect and defend our Constitution.

Twenty-three years ago I took the Hippocratic Oath when I graduated from medical school, to protect my patients from harm and injustice and to care for them in a covenantal relationship that always put their interests first. Regrettably, just a few years later I was required by military regulations to violate this oath and my ethical convictions.

I vividly remember one patient, who came back to me for care in very challenging circumstances because of, not in spite of, my ethical convictions. I was assigned to one of our military service academies, where I saw a female cadet for what turned out to be an unplanned and unwanted pregnancy. In compliance with military regulations, I arranged for her to see another physician who would refer her for an abortion. When she asked why another physician was involved, I explained that I did not refer for abortion because it went against my ethical convictions about protecting life.

Over the next week, I helped her negotiate some bureaucratic hurdles in obtaining the ultrasound ordered by the other physician. After seeing the other doctor in follow-up for the abortion referral, she chose to come back to me for continued care when she decided to keep the baby instead of going through with the abortion. She associated me with caring for her, but the other physician with simply referring her for the abortion.

Our elected representatives in Congress passed laws multiple times to protect these conscience rights. I feel that the efforts to overturn these rights are unconstitutional, and violate the most basic protections of the Declaration of Independence.