



A Colorado lawmaker wants the Defense Department to remind active-duty and reserve service members about the rules limiting participation in partisan political events.

Rep. Mike Coffman, R-Colo., a member of the House Armed Services Committee who served in the Army and Marine Corps, said in a Thursday letter to Defense Secretary Leon Panetta that he thinks existing regulations are fine but that troops may need a reminder.

Coffman said the recent appearance of an Army Reserve corporal in uniform speaking on behalf of a Republican presidential candidate is “a grave failure in leadership.”

Coffman, however, said the soldier “blatantly” disregarded Defense Department Directive 1344.10, which restricts political activity by active and reserve personnel and civilian workers. The directive prohibits wearing of uniforms at political events and making political speeches.

“The soldier’s activities not merely skirted the margins of what is acceptable behavior, but demonstrated either a complete contempt for the standing policy or an unconscionable ignorance of it,” Coffman said.

He acknowledged that the Pentagon ordered a swift investigation. “However, the damage of his actions cannot be undone, and the problem is likely broader than the actions of a single individual,” Coffman said. “I believe the existing regulations are appropriate policies that clearly express the intent of the Department of Defense. However, I see a grave failure in leaders in the chain of command’s ability to communicate and enforce them.”

Coffman wants the Pentagon to recirculate the directive, “reinforce what the regulations are and issue a warning to the respective service chiefs to ensure that this type of activity does not

occur in the future.”

By Rick Maze [Army Times](#) January 6, 2012