

Ambassador Sees Improvement in Religious Freedom Worldwide

Sam Brownback serves as one of the original proponents of the 1998 International Religious Freedom Act, explaining why his appointment as ambassador-at-large for International Religious Freedom had special meaning.

“When we first proposed the law, we were concerned about being able to more vigorously help individuals who had been arrested or were being persecuted,” says Ambassador Brownback.

“I am pleased that it has developed into a much larger operation than we originally envisioned,” he adds, “and I am pleased it has gone from a ‘name and shame’ to a positive movement that shows how embracing religious freedom will help nations grow.”

In terms of success stories, the ambassador points to progress in Sudan, which recently overturned its blasphemy laws. Other success stories include improvements for religious freedom in Uzbekistan and the United Arab Emirates, among others.

“What was originally a system to strengthen help for the persecuted has developed into a worldwide movement toward religious freedom,” he continues.

The 2018 and 2019 Religious Freedom Ministerials were held at the State Department on a grand scale with the inner courtyard being covered with a large tent. The two-day events brought together foreign ministers and top officials of nearly 80 countries to discuss global religious freedom issues.

Following a public statement at the event by the vice president demanding imprisoned American missionary Andrew

Brunson be freed from a Turkish jail, he appeared on the stage 30 minutes later to announce his release—to the cheers of those assembled.

Even skeptics are impressed by the kind, patient way in which Brownback works the world stage. He brings warring parties together, urges belligerent governments to be more responsive and boards the first plane available to travel to a trouble spot when needed.

Brownback was born on a farm in Kansas and is a two-term senator from the Sunflower State.

“We are especially pleased by the way other freedom-loving countries have joined us in a worldwide movement to expand religious freedom, including Hungary, Poland, the U.K., Denmark and others,” he says.

The uniting of countries to support the issues is culminating at the next Religious Freedom Ministerial, which will be held outside the United States for the first time. It will be hosted by Poland as an on-site and virtual event.

In addition to the ministerials and the personal work of the ambassador, he oversees the fully staffed Office of International Religious Freedom at the State Department and a weekly roundtable meeting with various organizations who are working for religious freedom worldwide and tracking information on those suffering persecution for their faith.

Brownback gives special credit to President Donald J. Trump, saying, “A supportive administration makes a big difference in what we are able to do and accomplish.”

The future is not without challenges, according to Brownback. A devout Catholic, he regularly attends church.

An area of particular concern to him is China, where he points to a newly belligerent stance, not only for those within its

borders into Hong Kong and other areas.

The ambassador has a special challenge to churches and individual believers: "I am always happy when I have a chance to speak at a Christian school, a church or a conference, and I can challenge all to pray, to help us with efforts to support the persecuted. In particular, I like to challenge the young people to take a mission trip to a suffering area and consider joining us in one of our many opportunities to make a difference in the world."

"As a believer, I am particularly challenged by and ask for special prayers for wisdom, guidance and tact as we stand for the persecuted worldwide."

From Kansas farm boy to senator to governor of Kansas and now the ambassador for International Religious Freedom, Sam Brownback is one of those special servants of God who quietly, faithfully and humbly obey Him.

A generation of young people can be challenged to consider the world as their next stage, just as Sam Brownback has. {eo}

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