

How Does Your Congressman Score on International Religious Freedom?

As more and more religious minorities around the world find themselves in peril, the issue of international religious liberty is becoming more and more a central topic of American politics.

International religious liberty is a key issue for the 21st Century Wilberforce Initiative, which released its “scorecard” on the issue for the 114th Congress that concluded on Jan. 20. The organization issued the following statement about its report:

“Having served 34 years in Congress,” says former Congressman Frank Wolf, now Distinguished Senior Fellow with the 21st Century Wilberforce Initiative, “I know that the International Religious Freedom Congressional Scorecard is a much-needed tool. The IRF Congressional Scorecard will help recognize and encourage members of Congress who are doing vital and difficult work promoting religious freedom around the globe. Just as important, the Scorecard will inform Americans and help strengthen their voices.”

How does the Scorecard work? Members of Congress were evaluated on their public engagement with international religious freedom based on their sponsorship of bills, resolutions, and amendments, related caucus work and votes in the House and the Senate. Senator Marco Rubio and Representative Chris Smith earned the overall top scores. Thirty-nine legislators (22 Republicans and 17 Democrats) are recognized as “Notable Leaders.”

The purposes of the Scorecard are to increase congressional awareness of international religious freedom issues, to

encourage legislators to take bold action in support of this cause, and to publicly recognize the work of religious freedom champions.

The 21st Century Wilberforce Initiative scored twenty-five (25) items in the House and fourteen (14) items in the Senate from the 114th Congress. A key achievement was the passage, with overwhelming bipartisan support, of the Frank R. Wolf International Religious Freedom Act, which broadens America's ability to advance religious freedom worldwide through enhanced diplomacy, training, counterterrorism efforts and stronger political responses to religious freedom violations and violent extremism. President Obama signed the Act into law on Dec. 16, 2016.

Congress also declared that atrocities perpetrated by the Islamic State against religious and ethnic minorities in Iraq and Syria constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

In the words of 21st Century Wilberforce Initiative President and Founder Dr. Randel Everett: "The International Religious Freedom Congressional Scorecard is an educational tool and should not be perceived as an effort to support or endorse specific legislation or candidates. I am pleased that results in this Scorecard demonstrate that religious freedom issues can transcend the partisan divide."

Click [here](#) to read the 21st Century Wilberforce Initiative's International Religious Freedom Scorecard. {eoa}