

President Trump Picks His Global Religious Liberty Watchdog

For a second time in 24 hours, President Donald Trump managed to enrage liberals and LGBT activists by announcing his pick to be the next U.S. ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom: Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback.

The Republican governor, a former senator and congressman, is an evangelical Christian who previously served in both the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate. Although he's known as one of the nation's leading "social conservative" politicians, he has also distinguished himself as a champion for religious liberty.

"Religious Freedom is the first freedom," he said in a tweet sent out shortly after the president's intention to nominate him was announced. "The choice of what you do with your own soul. I am honored to serve such an important cause."

If confirmed by the Senate, Brownback's new job would entail heading up the Office of International Religious Freedom in the Department of State, which was created by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998. The OIRF has the mission of promoting religious freedom as a core objective of U.S. foreign policy, and its staff monitors religious persecution and discrimination worldwide, recommending and implementing policies in response.

A long line of evangelical faith leaders have praised the president's choice, including:

- Dr. David Jeremiah, senior pastor, Shadow Mountain Community Church—"Once again, the president has made a decision that I not only can applaud, but that I can

celebrate with exuberance! Governor Sam Brownback is a known conservative, a tireless fighter for religious liberty and he is a longtime friend to many of us. Well done, Mr. President."

- Rev. Johnnie Moore, founder and CEO, The KAIROS Company—"There's no issue in the world I care more about than religious liberty. There is no person in the world that I know cares more about these issues than Governor Sam Brownback. The decision to take someone of his stature—a sitting governor—and put him in a position of this importance is hugely encouraging. I commend the president for making a brilliant decision, and I call upon Congress to expedite this and all of the president's outstanding appointments."
- Dr. James Dobson and *My Family Talk*—"I applaud the nomination of Gov. Sam Brownback as the new ambassador-at-large for the Office of International Religious Freedom. President Trump has made this selection in six months, whereas it took his predecessor 27 months to do the same. In appointing a man of deep personal faith who is also a sitting governor, the president has sent a powerful message to the country and the world, that the United States will lead the global effort in defending and preserving every man, woman and child's right practice his or her beliefs without fear of intimidation or violence. Many of the world's most challenging political, social and military conflicts are borne out of an attack on religious freedom. From Southeast Asia to Northern Africa and the Middle East, religious oppression impacts more people today than perhaps at any other time in world history. We pray for all those who suffer because of what they believe, and we pray also for the success of Gov. Brownback as he works to defend this inalienable human right."
- Rev. Samuel Rodriguez, president, National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference—"The nomination of my dear friend, Gov. Sam Brownback, as the new ambassador-

at-large for international religious freedom is a significant and very positive step in the right direction for our country and the world. In the case of the IRF Ambassador, the Trump Administration is ahead of the pace set by President Obama, who left the position vacant for over two years after his inauguration—and the faith community has taken note. By appointing a sitting governor, this administration has elevated the importance of the position within the Department of State and has sent a powerful signal to the world that the United States is serious about preserving and defending the religious liberties of all believers. Religious liberty is the No. 1 human rights issue of our day and is currently under siege in so many corners of the globe. In Gov. Brownback, I am confident the United States will once again assume its rightful place as the world's leader in preserving and expanding this most precious of all human liberties."

- Dr. Ronnie Floyd, senior pastor, Cross Church—"There is no leader more qualified, more passionate and more capable of taking on the role of ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom than Gov. Sam Brownback. The governor has been a tireless advocate for religious liberty both here and around the globe. He is a great choice, and I commend the president for making it."
- Pastor Greg Laurie, senior pastor, Harvest Christian Fellowship—"As an evangelist, it's my privilege to freely share the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout our country, and it is the privilege of those who hear to respond. Yet so many people in our world don't have the freedom to freely share their faith, or freely accept the truth or freely live out their faith without fear of persecution, imprisonment and even death. Governor Sam Brownback is skilled in the corridors of power, and as a man of sincere faith, he knows implicitly how central freedom of religion is to the freedom and dignity of humankind. I applaud his appointment, and I'll be

praying for his success.” {eoa}