

Scorecard Rates Congressional Support for Religious Freedom

Religious freedom is one of the most precious freedoms we enjoy in America. But nearly 70 percent of the world's 6.8 billion people live in countries with restrictions on **religious expression**. Even some of our freedoms are being eroded in the United States.

Are our federal legislators making religious freedom a priority?

Now there is a way to keep tabs on their voting records on **religious freedom** legislation. Open Doors USA has published a midterm Congressional Scorecard for International Religious Freedom of the 112th session of Congress to evaluate each senator's and representative's record on religious freedom issues.

Legislators are graded on their votes and co-sponsorship of a selection of the most important religious freedom bills and resolutions that seek to protect Christians and other persecuted faith groups worldwide.

"Open Doors USA's scorecard has helped to increase the number of congressional offices who are making international religious freedom a higher priority," says Open Doors USA Director of Advocacy Lindsay Vessey. "We do this by regularly communicating with nearly all congressional offices, alerting them to opportunities to engage on international religious freedom issues, as well as informing them of which items will be included in the scorecard."

According to the scorecard, U.S. senators on average scored much lower than their House counterparts. The top scoring senators were Mark Kirk (R-IL), Carl Levin (D-MI), Roy Blunt (R-MO), Jon Tester (D-MT) and John Cornyn (R-TX). All received

a score of 75 percent. No U.S. senator received a 100 percent rating.

Members of the House, on the other hand, had 10 members with a perfect score. The representatives include Ken Calvert (R-CA), Michael Capuano (D-MA), John Carter (R-TX), Gerry Connolly (D-VA), Robert Dold (R-IL), Jeff Duncan (R-SC), Doug Lamborn (R-CO), Tom Marino (R-PA), Scott Rigell (R-VA) and Ed Royce (R-CA).

"The scorecard is one of the most simple and effective ways that Christians in America can help promote religious freedom. If your representative or senator has scored well, please thank them," says Open Doors USA president and CEO Carl Moeller. "If they have scored poorly, please encourage them to vote on these pertinent issues and to make religious freedom a top priority."

One Congressman, Rep. Frank Wolf (R-VA), earned a score of 100 percent-plus. Wolf ranked over 100 percent because members who are the primary sponsor of a scored bill or resolution receive an extra credit point for each item of which they are the main sponsor. Extra credit is awarded to members who have dedicated extra time and resources to promote religious freedom.

"Open Doors does critical work by shining a bright light on abuses of religious freedom the world over," says Wolf. "Religious freedom is often called America's 'first freedom'—it is in fact at the heart of the American 'experiment.' I firmly believe that Congress has a unique role to play in being a voice for the voiceless, wherever they may be. It is my hope that the work of Open Doors and other like-minded organizations will raise awareness, heighten consciousness and compel action in the halls of Congress and the administration."