

## [S. 2078, United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Reauthorization Act of 2015](#)

### FLOOR SITUATION

On Tuesday, October 6, 2015, the House will consider [S.2078](#), the *United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Reauthorization Act of 2015*, under suspension of the rules. S. 2078 was introduced on September 24, 2015, by Sen. Bob Corker (R-TN) and passed the Senate by unanimous consent on September 30, 2015.

### SUMMARY

S. 2078 extends the operating authorities for the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) through September 30, 2019.

The bill requires the USCIRF to complete and submit to Congress a consensus strategic plan addressing: Commission priorities; the scope, content, and timing of its annual report; a description of recommended changes regarding personnel matters; and, funding requirements for the period covered by the strategic plan. The plan must be submitted within 180 days of enactment and not less frequently than biennially thereafter.

The bill authorizes the USCIRF to implement provisions related to personnel and the Commission's annual report that are subject to consensus among Commissioners and that have been submitted to Congress as part of the strategic plan. The bill also requires the Commission to make certain information and documents available to Congress on request.

The bill authorizes the appropriation of \$3.5 million for each of fiscal years 2016 to 2019, the same as its current-year appropriations, subject to timely completion of the strategic plan and annual financial report.

### BACKGROUND

The USCIRF is an independent entity created by Congress in 1998 to monitor the universal right to freedom of religion or belief abroad. The Commission observes violations of religious freedom across

the globe and makes policy recommendations to the President, Secretary of State, and Congress.<sup>1</sup> The Commission is composed of nine private sector Commissioners who volunteer their time in support of USCIRF's mandate and who are appointed by the President and bipartisan House and Senate leaders. The appointees are individuals of distinction who are charged with independently assessing and reporting on threats to religious freedom around the world.

The underlying statutory authority for the USCIRF expired on September 30, 2015, but was extended until December 11, 2015, by H.R. 719, the Continuing Appropriations Act, 2016, which the House passed by a vote of [277 to 151](#) on September 30, 2015.

According to USCIRF Chairman Robert P. George, "this bipartisan bill would allow USCIRF to continue its vital mission in support of international religious freedom. Such support is critically necessary today, especially given the importance of religion in today's world and the violations of religious freedom that top the foreign policy challenges the United States faces."<sup>2</sup>

### **COST**

A Congressional Budget Office (CBO) cost estimate is currently unavailable.

### **STAFF CONTACT**

For questions or further information please contact [John Huston](#) with the House Republican Policy Committee by email or at 6-5539.

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<sup>1</sup> See article - <http://www.uscifr.gov/news-room/press-releases/uscifr-supports-the-us-commission-international-religious-freedom>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid