

Arabia, and Kuwait account for more than 81 percent of all reported cases of state criminal blasphemy enforcement;

Whereas USCIRF has found that the three countries without an official state religion that have the highest state enforcement of blasphemy laws are Russia, India, and Indonesia;

Whereas the Pew Research Center found that countries with laws against blasphemy, apostasy, or defamation of religion were more likely to have severe governmental restrictions on religion, and to experience social hostilities based on religion, than countries that did not have such laws;

Whereas restrictive laws beyond those penalizing blasphemy, heresy, and apostasy further limit religious freedom, such as extremism laws—

(1) in Russia that have been used to ban Jehovah's Witnesses as an extremist organization and fueled persecution of this religious group;

(2) in China, to arbitrarily detain an estimated 800,000 to 2,000,000 Uighur Muslims in internment camps because they followed Islamic rituals and practices; and

(3) in North Korea, to detain an estimated 50,000 to 70,000 Christians in labor camps because they followed the tenets of Christianity;

Whereas an international group of experts convened by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights recommended in 2012 that “[s]tates that have blasphemy laws should repeal the[m] as such laws have a stifling impact on the enjoyment of freedom of religion or belief and healthy dialogue and debate about religion.”;

Whereas blasphemy laws are inconsistent with United Nations resolutions adopted by consensus since 2011 recognizing that religious intolerance is best fought through positive measures, such as education, outreach, and counter-speech, and that criminalization of speech is warranted only for the prevention of imminent violence;

Whereas, according to the annual religious freedom report published by the Department of State in 2015, attackers in Bangladesh killed five allegedly anti-Islamic or secularist writers and publishers, and injured three others;

Whereas, in response to these killings, the Home Minister of Bangladesh, rather than condemning the murders, called on bloggers and others to refrain from writings that could hurt the religious feelings of others and added that violators of the warning would be subject to prosecution under the restrictive religious freedom laws of Bangladesh;

Whereas a 2016 report by USCIRF on Bangladesh found that religious and civil society groups fear that increasing religious extremism will result in more criminal attacks and threats;

Whereas restrictive religious freedom laws validate and promote social violence targeted at religious minorities and dissenters, whether Christian, Muslim, secularist, or other;

Whereas more than one-quarter of reported cases implicated alleged blasphemous speech posted on social media platforms;

Whereas USCIRF has found that in Pakistan, blasphemy laws have been used to prosecute and persecute Muslims, Christians, secularists, and others;

Whereas, according to a Pew Center report on religion and public life, Pakistan stands out for having one of the highest levels of restrictions on religion when both government restrictions and social hostilities are taken into account;

Whereas, as of May 2020, USCIRF was aware of approximately 40 individuals on

death row for blasphemy in Pakistan or serving life sentences;

Whereas Asia Bibi was sentenced to death for blasphemy in 2010 and was held on death row for 8 years, until the Supreme Court of Pakistan overturned her conviction in 2018, upheld her acquittal, and granted her permission to leave the country to flee the threats against her in 2019;

Whereas Pakistan selectively enforces the blasphemy and anti-terrorism laws against minority religious groups, including by specifically targeting Ahmadiyya Muslims such as Abdul Shako, an 82-year old optician and bookseller who was recently released after serving over three years in prison on such charges;

Whereas, on July 29, 2020, Tahir Ahmad Naseem, a United States citizen, was shot and killed in a courtroom while on trial for blasphemy;

Whereas, in 2017, the Christian Governor of Jakarta, Indonesia, was convicted for blasphemy of Islam and sentenced to two years in jail;

Whereas several countries that previously maintained blasphemy laws have recently removed these provisions, including Iceland, Norway, Malta, Denmark, Ireland, Canada, New Zealand, Greece, and Scotland;

Whereas blasphemy laws in the United States were invalidated by the adoption of the First Amendment to the Constitution, which protects the freedoms of thought, conscience, expression, and religious exercise; and

Whereas the United States has become a beacon of religious freedom and tolerance around the world: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) recognizes that blasphemy, heresy, and apostasy laws inappropriately position governments as arbiters of religious truth and empower officials to impose religious dogma on individuals or minorities through the power of the government or through violence sanctioned by the government;

(2) calls on the President and the Secretary of State to encourage the repeal of blasphemy, heresy, and apostasy in bilateral discussions between the United States and all countries that have such laws, through direct interventions in bilateral and multilateral fora;

(3) encourages the President and the Secretary of State to oppose—

(A) any efforts, by the United Nations or by other international or multilateral fora, to create an international anti-blasphemy norm, such as the “defamation of religions” resolutions introduced in the United Nations between 1999 and 2010; and

(B) any attempts to expand the international norm on incitement to include blasphemy or defamation of religions;

(4) supports efforts by the United Nations to combat intolerance, discrimination, or violence against persons based on religion or belief without restricting expression, including United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution 16/18 (2011) and the Istanbul Process meetings pursuant to such resolution, that are consistent with the First Amendment to the Constitution;

(5) calls on the President and the Secretary of State to designate countries that enforce blasphemy, heresy, or apostasy laws as “countries of particular concern for religious freedom” under section 402(b)(1)(A)(ii) of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6442(b)(1)(A)(ii)) for engaging in or tolerating severe violations of religious freedom, as a result of the abuses flowing from the enforcement of such laws and from unpunished vigilante violence often generated by blasphemy allegations;

(6) urges the governments of countries that enforce blasphemy, heresy, or apostasy laws

to allow for freedom of religion and expression and amend or repeal such laws, as they provide pretext and impunity for vigilante violence against religious minorities; and

(7) urges the governments of countries that have prosecuted, imprisoned, and persecuted people on charges of blasphemy, heresy, or apostasy to release such people unconditionally and, once released, to ensure their safety and that of their families.

DATA ANALYTICS ROBOCALL TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 2019

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 585, S. 2204.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2204) to allow the Federal Communications Commission to carry out a pilot program under which voice service providers could block certain automated calls, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Data Analytics Robocall Technology Act of 2019” or the “DART Act of 2019”.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act—

(1) the term “Commission” means the Federal Communications Commission;

(2) the term “covered ruling” means the “Declaratory Ruling and Third Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking in the matter of Advanced Methods to Target and Eliminate Unlawful Robocalls”, adopted by the Commission on June 6, 2019 (FCC 19–51; CG Docket No. 17–59);

(3) the term “public safety answering point” has the meaning given the term in section 222(h) of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 222(h)); and

(4) the term “voice service” means any service that—

(A) is interconnected with the public switched telephone network; and

(B) furnishes voice communications to an end user using resources from the North American Numbering Plan or any successor to the North American Numbering Plan adopted by the Commission under section 251(e)(1) of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 251(e)(1)).

SEC. 3. RULEMAKING.

Not later than 18 months after the date of enactment of this Act, the Commission shall initiate a rulemaking to consider establishing a process under which the Commission shall maintain a list of numbers that are not eligible to be blocked by a voice service provider, which may include a number used—

(1) for outgoing calls by a public safety answering point or a similar facility that is designated to originate or route emergency calls;

(2) to originate calls from a government entity, such as a call generated during an emergency;

(3) by a school, or a similar institution, to provide school-related notifications, such as a notification regarding—

(A) a weather-related closure; or

(B) the existence of an emergency affecting a school or students attending a school; and

(4) for similar or emergency purposes, as determined appropriate by the Commission.

SEC. 4. REPORTS ON DEPLOYMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF CALL BLOCKING AND CALLER ID AUTHENTICATION.

Not later than 180 days after the date on which the Commission receives any report under paragraph 90 of the covered ruling, the Commission shall submit to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate and the Committee on Energy and Commerce of the House of Representatives—

(1) an analysis by the Commission with respect to the effectiveness of various categories of call blocking tools, as evaluated in the report; and

(2) any legislative recommendations of the Commission relating to the report.

SEC. 5. RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.

Nothing in this Act may be construed to impede or delay the analysis by the Commission of the most effective means by which to maintain and administer a list of numbers that may not be blocked (referred to in the covered ruling as a “Critical Calls List”), as considered in the covered ruling.

Mr. GARDNER. I ask unanimous consent that the committee-reported substitute amendment be agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The committee-reported amendment in the nature of a substitute was agreed to.

The bill (S. 2204), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

AMENDING THE HEALTH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY FOR ECONOMIC AND CLINICAL HEALTH ACT

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 7898, which was received from the House.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 7898) to amend the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act to require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to consider certain recognized security practices of covered entities and business associates when making certain determinations, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. GARDNER. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (H.R. 7898) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

CHILD CARE PROTECTION IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2020

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I ask that the Chair lay before the Senate the message to accompany S. 2683.

The Presiding Officer laid before the Senate the following message from the House of Representatives:

Resolved, that the bill from the Senate (S. 2683) entitled “An Act to establish a task force to assist States in implementing hiring requirements for child care staff members to improve child safety.”, do pass with an amendment.

MOTION TO CONCUR

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I move to concur in the House amendment, and I know of no further debate on the motion.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no further debate, the question is on agreeing to the motion to concur.

The motion was agreed to.

Mr. GARDNER. I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNITED STATES SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL COMMISSION AMENDMENTS ACT OF 2020

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I ask that the Chair lay before the Senate the message to accompany S. 3989.

The Presiding Officer laid before the Senate the following message from the House of Representatives:

Resolved, that the bill from the Senate (S. 3989) entitled “An Act to amend the United States Semiquincentennial Commission Act of 2016 to modify certain membership and other requirements of the United States Semiquincentennial Commission, and for other purposes.”, do pass with an amendment.

MOTION TO CONCUR

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I move to concur in the House amendment, and I ask unanimous consent that the motion be agreed to and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK OWNERSHIP CORRECTION ACT

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources be discharged and the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 5459.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 5459) to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to correct a land own-

ership error within the boundary of Rocky Mountain National Park, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the committee was discharged, and the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. GARDNER. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill was ordered to a third reading and was read the third time.

Mr. GARDNER. I know of no further debate on the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

The bill (H.R. 5459) was passed.

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDERS FOR SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2020

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 1 p.m., Sunday, December 20; further, that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, and morning business be closed; further, that following leader remarks, the Senate proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the Noland nomination, under the previous order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 1 P.M. TOMORROW

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 6:49 p.m., adjourned until Sunday, December 20, 2020, at 1 p.m.

CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by the Senate December 19, 2020:

TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY

BETH HARWELL, OF TENNESSEE, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY FOR A TERM EXPIRING MAY 18, 2024.

THE JUDICIARY

THOMPSON MICHAEL DIETZ, OF NEW JERSEY, TO BE A JUDGE OF THE UNITED STATES COURT OF FEDERAL CLAIMS FOR A TERM OF FIFTEEN YEARS.