

on the resources the joint task force needs to be successful.

This bill reauthorizes the Secretary of Homeland Security's ability to create and use joint task forces while also requiring DHS to set up a staffing plan and share that information with Congress.

With this legislation, we can support the men and women working to protect the homeland and give them the resources that they need to do their job of keeping the American people safe.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to support this legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GREEN of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. HIGGINS).

Mr. HIGGINS of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of S. 4698, the DHS Joint Task Forces Reauthorization Act of 2024. I am proud to lead the House companion to this bill.

This bipartisan and bicameral legislation will extend the Department of Homeland Security's joint task force authority for another 2 years.

Extending this authority allows for a unified DHS law enforcement approach to target, dismantle, and disrupt transnational criminal organizations and their illegal activities. This coordination enables personnel from Customs and Border Protection, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the U.S. Coast Guard, and others to continue integrating their existing authorities to work together to confront complex national security threats that impact our Nation's land, sea, and air borders, and to combat terrorism, unlawful immigration, maritime mass migration, and illicit smuggling.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support S. 4698.

Mr. CORREA. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

In closing, I thank my colleagues Mr. HIGGINS from Louisiana and Mr. SUOZZI from New York for leading this bill in this House, and my colleagues from both sides of the aisle on Homeland Security for their support. I would also like to thank Senator PETERS for leading this bill in the Senate.

During my own travels this year, I saw the great work that Joint Task Force East conducts on a day-to-day basis. This reauthorization makes sure that their good work continues.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support S. 4698, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. GREEN of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Again, I urge my colleagues to support S. 4698, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. GREEN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 4698.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the

rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON  
INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS  
FREEDOM REAUTHORIZATION  
ACT OF 2024

Mrs. RADEWAGEN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 3764) to extend and authorize annual appropriations for the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom through fiscal year 2026.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 3764

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

**SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

This Act may be cited as the "United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Reauthorization Act of 2024".

**SEC. 2. UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM.**

(a) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—Section 207(a) of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6435(a)) is amended by striking "2023 and 2024" and inserting "2025 and 2026".

(b) EXTENSION OF AUTHORIZATION.—Section 209 of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6436) is amended by striking "September 30, 2024" and inserting "September 30, 2026".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from American Samoa (Mrs. RADEWAGEN) and the gentleman from North Carolina (Ms. MANNING) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from American Samoa.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. RADEWAGEN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on this measure.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from American Samoa?

There was no objection.

Mrs. RADEWAGEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, religious persecution is a tragic reality in many parts of the world, whether it be against Uyghur Muslims in China, Christian minorities in parts of Africa and the Middle East, the Baha'i in Iran, or religious communities attempting to worship without official control by repressive regimes in Burma, China, or North Korea. Anti-Semitism is on the rise.

This bipartisan bill, which unanimously passed the Senate, will continue the good work of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, or USCIRF.

Congress created USCIRF as an independent Federal entity in 1998. Although the fundamental freedom of re-

ligion was under siege around the world, it did not receive enough attention in U.S. foreign policy.

USCIRF is a body of experts who speak out on behalf of persecuted believers of any faith and push for accountability beyond what the State Department or the White House may view as diplomatically comfortable.

The commission's independent voice remains critical today, as the State Department too often pushes religious freedom to the side.

Although the law requires the department to designate countries of particular concern for religious freedom violations, their list of CPC countries never includes all the countries that meet the statutory criteria.

Thankfully, USCIRF continues its truth telling to identify the other persecutors that should be designated. Those countries include Vietnam, where Communist authorities severely repress Christians, Buddhists, and other believers who attempt to worship outside of state control. They also include Nigeria, where Islamist militias murder Christians with impunity.

They include Afghanistan, where the brutal Taliban have retaken power and moved that country back to an intolerant darkness. If any countries are countries of particular concern for serious violations of religious freedom, then those should be among them.

S. 3764 is a simple extension of USCIRF's statutory authority so that the commission can continue its bipartisan, nonsectarian work on behalf of our Nation's first freedom, religious liberty.

I am very pleased that this is a clean reauthorization and does not include any of the previous attempts by some in the other body to make USCIRF more partisan or to dilute its mandate with extraneous issues.

Through robust oversight, we also must work to ensure that USCIRF remains focused on its true, bipartisan statutory mandate; namely, "the annual and ongoing review of the facts and circumstances of violations of religious freedom."

I thank Senator RUBIO and his bipartisan colleagues who introduced this bill in the Senate where it received unanimous support.

I also recognize the important work of the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Global Human Rights Subcommittee, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH), who is the author of the House side reauthorization. He has been a leader on religious freedom issues throughout his 43-year career in this House.

We need to pass this bill immediately to help ensure that freedom of religion under threat from extremists and authoritarian governments around the world remains front and center.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. MANNING. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of S. 3764, and I thank our Senate colleagues, especially Senators MARCO

RUBIO, BEN CARDIN, and JAMES LANKFORD, and my dear friend and colleague, Representative CHRIS SMITH, for their leadership in advancing this important measure.

This bill would reauthorize the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, or USCIRF, which was established nearly 26 years ago as an independent, bipartisan U.S. Government advisory body to monitor and report annually on religious freedom abroad and make policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State, and Congress.

Mr. Speaker, the right of each individual to freely practice his or her religion or hold nonreligious beliefs is a fundamental human right. Yet, everyday individuals and communities around the world are subject to escalating violence, persecution, and discrimination simply for practicing their beliefs.

USCIRF's 2024 report outlines serious violations of religious freedom and highlights some concerning global developments, including laws restricting religious freedom like blasphemy laws, anti-conversion laws, and restrictions on religious garb, governments engaged in transnational repression to silence religious minorities and their advocates abroad, and the disturbing global rise of anti-Semitism during 2023 and 2024.

USCIRF has done an excellent job highlighting the threat that anti-Semitism poses to religious freedom, including issuing an important report on anti-Semitism in Europe in 2021, as well as highlighting the growing number of national strategies and other initiatives around the world to combat this trend.

This year, USCIRF noted the significant increase in anti-Semitic hate crimes following the October 7, 2023, Hamas terrorist attacks against Israel in which Jews around the world were collectively blamed for the actions of the Israeli Government. USCIRF continues to document anti-Semitic tropes being weaponized in elections, Holocaust distortion and denial, and even the impact of laws prohibiting ritual slaughter on religious freedom.

Throughout this time, it has diligently followed its mission to advance international freedom of religion or belief by independently assessing and unflinchingly confronting threats to this fundamental right.

Mr. Speaker, USCIRF is needed more than ever. By reauthorizing USCIRF, we will ensure the commission will be able to continue to defend and promote religious freedom by conducting research, publishing reports and analysis for the public, and offering recommendations to policymakers on religious freedom violations around the world.

Mr. Speaker, I support this bill, I encourage my colleagues to support its passage, and I reserve the balance of my time.

□ 1715

Mrs. RADEWAGEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, religious freedom flows from the inherent dignity of every human person and should be protected wherever it is threatened.

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom remains an independent voice on behalf of religious believers everywhere. USCIRF will continue to enjoy bipartisan support so long as they focus on their core mandate, which is the protection of religious liberty around the world.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. MANNING. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. RADEWAGEN. Mr. Speaker, attempts to distort definitions of religious freedom to cover unrelated or partisan issues will quickly squander that support and endanger the extension of USCIRF's mandate in the future. S. 3764 will ensure that the Commission continues its nonpartisan mission of promoting the right of religious liberty that we hold so dear as a nation. It deserves our unanimous support.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. MANNING. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time for the purpose of closing.

Mr. Speaker, this bill would allow USCIRF to continue its important work of advising Congress, engaging with the executive branch, monitoring religious freedom abroad, and raising public awareness.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues, Representative CHRIS SMITH and Senators MARCO RUBIO, BEN CARDIN, and JAMES LANKFORD, for their hard work on this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mrs. RADEWAGEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of S. 3764, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Reauthorization Act of 2024.

This is a simple, clean, 3-sentence bill that reauthorizes the Commission, popularly known as USCIRF, for 2025 and 2026. It does so by amending the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 in the authorization of appropriations merely by updating the years of authorization and expiration. This has become the tradition: clean, simple, 2-year reauthorizations, and we should stick to this.

It's vital that we reauthorize USCIRF because it is the linchpin of the entire program Congress created to promote religious freedom through the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998. USCIRF's high-quality reporting and high-profile commissioners influence the State Department's work on religious freedom, making it more honest and effective.

USCIRF is tasked with defending the universal right to freedom of religion or belief abroad, reviewing reports of religious freedom

violations and making policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State, and Congress. USCIRF Commissioners are appointed by the President and the congressional leadership of both political parties. In May, Speaker JOHNSON appointed our former colleague the Honorable Vicky Hartzler to the Commission, and none of you will be surprised to hear that she's been a very active and engaged commissioner.

It was my very good friend Chairman Frank Wolf, who, in 1998, with great legislative skill, commitment and driving passion, pushed a supportive Congress but highly reluctant White House into enacting a singularly important human rights law—the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA). Frank Wolf's law made the protection and promotion of religious freedom a serious priority in U.S. foreign policy by creating an Ambassador at Large for Religious Freedom, by establishing the Office of International Religious Freedom at the Department of State—which among other duties, compiles the International Religious Freedom Reports on every country in the world—and by crafting the independent-minded U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, the subject of today's reauthorization.

Importantly, Frank Wolf's landmark law also created a system for naming and taking action against Countries of Particular Concern, or CPCs. History has shown that when the U.S. elevates religious freedom and that priority is conveyed to Countries of Particular Concern, conditions often change for the better, prisoners of conscience gain their freedom and progress is made in the free or at least freer exercise of religious liberty.

As the author of the Frank R. Wolf International Religious Freedom Act, which updated Frank's legislation in 2016, I follow the implementation of this law very closely. Since its founding, the International Religious Freedom Commission has issued 25 annual reports and recommended that 25 countries be designated CPCs—17 of them have ultimately been designated by the State Department. The IRFC acts as a true watchdog, recommending with incisive commentary that more countries be designated as Countries of Particular Concern than the State Department regularly designates. This demonstrates that USCIRF is a genuinely outside force, a constructive influence on the State Department. Convincing the State Department to heed the recommendations of USCIRF can be a process that takes years, and some administrations are more difficult to convince than others.

In this respect the Biden administration has been one of the worst. Nigeria is the most egregious case of all. USCIRF has recommended CPC status—after all, almost 5,000 Christians were killed there for their faith last year, with rampant government complicity. This is no-brainer—but not for the Biden-Harris Administration, which attributes this modern martyrdom to climate change and tribal conflict. This is egregious. Over 90 percent of Christians killed for their faith last year, in the entire world, were killed in Nigeria. USCIRF, however, calls it like it is and pulls no punches.

Mr. Speaker, USCIRF in recent years has been more effective than at any point in its history. Its recent chairs and commissioners have raised the profile and credibility of the Commission. I can say today that the U.S.

Commission on International Religious Freedom is the U.S. government's strongest and most respected voice for victims of religious persecution worldwide.

Mr. Speaker, USCIRF's mission is to monitor religious freedom violations globally and make policy recommendation to the U.S. government—that's a big mission, and it's always commanded bipartisan support. S. 3764 and its House companion, H.R. 7025, which has identical language and was introduced by myself and my good friend Rep. ESHOO, has together an equal number of Republican and Democrat co-sponsors. I believe Speaker JOHNSON's most recent appointments to the Commission, our former colleague Vicky-Hartzler and Maureen Ferguson, will help keep it on course. Congress will continue to do its part.

USCIRF is important to millions of our constituents of all faiths. I urge my colleagues to support S. 3764 and reauthorize the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from American Samoa (Mrs. RADEWAGEN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 3764.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mrs. RADEWAGEN. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

#### GAO DATABASE MODERNIZATION ACT OF 2023

Mr. BENTZ. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 679) to amend chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, to require Federal agencies to submit to the Comptroller General of the United States a report on rules that are revoked, suspended, replaced, amended, or otherwise made ineffective.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 679

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "GAO Database Modernization Act of 2023".

#### SEC. 2. RULES NO LONGER IN EFFECT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 801(a)(1) of title 5, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

"(D) For any rule submitted under subparagraph (A), if the Federal agency promulgating the rule, in whole or in part, revokes, suspends, replaces, amends, or otherwise makes the rule ineffective, or the rule is made ineffective for any other reason, the Federal agency shall submit to the Comptroller General a report containing—

"(i) the title of the rule;

"(ii) the Federal Register citation for the rule, if any;

"(iii) the date on which rule was submitted to the Comptroller General; and

"(iv) a description of the provisions of the rule that are being revoked, suspended, replaced, amended, or otherwise made ineffective."

(b) SUNSET.—Effective on the date that is 6 years after the date of enactment of this Act, section 801(a)(1) of title 5, United States Code, is amended by striking subparagraph (D), as added by subsection (a).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BENTZ) and the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. IVEY) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BENTZ. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on S. 679.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Oregon?

There was no objection.

Mr. BENTZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of S. 679, the GAO Database Modernization Act. This is an important piece of legislation that would help Congress, the Government Accountability Office, and the public keep track of the rule-making activities of the administrative state.

Under the Congressional Review Act, administrative agencies are required to notify Congress and the GAO when that agency enacts a new rule. This notification process allows Congress to review and, if necessary, consider a resolution to reject the new rule within a certain period of time.

The notification process also allows the GAO to maintain a publicly available database of all rules. This publicly available database allows the American people to access information about the rules and regulations that govern their lives.

One downside, however, is that, under current law, agencies, although required to publish new rules, are not required to notify Congress or the GAO if they amend or eliminate a rule. This can lead to significant confusion. If the GAO is not notified of a change to or revocation of a rule, then it is unable to maintain an up-to-date database for the American people.

Further, because agencies are not required to notify Congress when a rule is modified or eliminated, many activities undertaken by the administrative state occur without any oversight.

As a result, the American people may view out-of-date information when searching for details about regulations, and Congress does not have easy access to all the information required to effectively conduct oversight of the administrative state.

S. 679 seeks to remedy this problem. The GAO Database Modernization Act will require administrative agencies to notify the GAO whenever they amend, suspend, or eliminate any rule.

This bill would allow the GAO to maintain a comprehensive database,

tracking all administrative rule-making developments, not just newly enacted rules. This commonsense, narrowly tailored, and bipartisan proposal will ensure that the American people have access to complete and correct information about the rules that govern their lives.

It will also allow Congress to better monitor the regulatory developments of the administrative state and ensure that Members of Congress are appropriately informed of the regulatory state of play.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. IVEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, the GAO Database Modernization Act would amend the Congressional Review Act to require Federal agencies to report to the GAO certain information about agency rules that are made ineffective due to an agency action or other reason.

The Congressional Review Act, or CRA, requires an agency to submit a report to both Houses of Congress and to GAO whenever it promulgates a rule. This reporting requirement enables Congress to be kept regularly informed of rulemaking activity by all administrative agencies.

GAO has created a publicly accessible database which tracks all rules submitted by the agencies. However, agencies do not currently report updates, suspensions, or alterations of rules to GAO unless any modifications are part of a newly promulgated regulation.

To increase transparency, this legislation amends the CRA to require agencies to submit a report to GAO on rules that are revoked, suspended, amended, or otherwise made ineffective.

While I do not oppose this legislation, I do note that I have concerns with the underlying Congressional Review Act, and I hope that we will have an opportunity to examine whether the law is operating as intended.

The CRA, which provides a fast-track process whereby Congress can overturn an agency regulation, could be misused to undermine lifesaving regulations to protect public health and safety.

Regulations take significant time, resources, public input, and expertise to craft, but the CRA allows narrow, partisan majorities in Congress to do away with them without any of the deliberative processes that went into making them.

Since the CRA also prohibits an agency from issuing another rule "in substantially the same form" without congressional authorization, it allows Congress to tie an agency's hands well into the future.

I hope this legislation is a modest improvement to oversight and transparency, but I hope that this is just the beginning of a larger conversation about the CRA and its impact on the regulatory process.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.