

faces a complex array of challenges, including authoritarian aggression, economic coercion, and emerging security threats.

Our ability to address these challenges requires strong alliances and close coordination with our partners.

□ 1600

The trilateral relationship between the United States, Japan, and the Republic of Korea is one of the most strategically significant partnerships that we have.

These are two of our closest allies, democracies that share our values, interests, and commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific.

The 2023 Camp David Leaders' Summit marked a historic step forward in trilateral cooperation, leading to expanded collaboration on military exercises, ballistic missile defense, cybersecurity development, finance, maritime security, and science and technology.

Strong partnerships need strong institutions. Since the Camp David summit, all three countries have experienced changes in executive leadership. That reality underscores why we must create mechanisms that ensure trilateral cooperation endures beyond any single administration.

This is exactly what H.R. 3429 seeks to accomplish. The bill codifies an annual inter-parliamentarian dialogue among the United States Congress, Japan's National Diet, and South Korea's National Assembly. It creates a formal mechanism for lawmakers from all three countries to meet regularly and coordinate on issues including defense, economic security, public health, and emerging technologies.

The legislation establishes a bipartisan and bicameral congressional delegation to participate in these discussions, ensuring that congressional engagement remains consistent and sustained over time.

Most importantly, this bill helps institutionalize trilateral cooperation so that our partnership continues to grow, regardless of political transitions in any of the three countries.

The bill sends a clear message: The United States is committed to long-term cooperation with our allies in Japan and South Korea. It recognizes that our trilateral partnership is not simply a response to the current challenges but a strategic investment in a more secure, prosperous, and stable Indo-Pacific.

Mr. Speaker, diplomacy is key to peace because we are stronger together with our allies. Whether it is the challenges posed by North Korea or the People's Republic of China, trilateral cooperation is one of the critical ways to ensure that America and our two closest allies in Asia are working hand in hand toward our common interests and advancement of peace and prosperity in the region. Congressional engagement with Japan and Korea will sustain long-term support and resources for trilateral cooperation.

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

Mr. MAST. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time to close.

Mr. Speaker, Japan and South Korea are two of America's most important treaty allies in the Indo-Pacific. This legislation builds upon our long-standing alliance with these two countries, so that we can ensure that these relationships can survive the struggles to come.

Mr. Speaker, I urge a "yes" vote on H.R. 3429, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MAST) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3429.

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 2026

Mr. MAST. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1744) to extend and authorize annual appropriations for the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom through fiscal year 2028, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1744

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 2026".

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 "2025 and 2026" and inserting "2027 and 2028, and for the period beginning on October 1, 2028, and ending on December 31, 2028".

(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, 2026" and inserting "December 31, 2028".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MAST) and the gentleman from California (Mr. BERA) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MAST. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 1744.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. MAST. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1744, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Reauthorization Act of 2026.

Congress created this commission, otherwise known as USCIRF, in 1998 with a clear statutory mandate to monitor conditions of religious freedom around the world and make recommendations to Congress and to the President to protect this right.

Since then, Congress has reauthorized the commission's operations, appropriations, and mandate numerous times. Under current law, USCIRF terminates on September 30th of this year. This bill reauthorizes the Commission through December of 2028.

America was founded on the principle that all human beings are endowed by our creator with certain unalienable rights. One of these, the very first laid out in the Bill of Rights to the Constitution, is the right to freely exercise one's religion according to one's conscience. Yet, throughout the world, believers suffer extreme persecution. Throughout history, tyrants and radical regimes always target religion first.

In Nigeria, seemingly every week, Christians are massacred by radical Fulani Muslims wielding machetes and crying: "Allahu akbar." Christians in China are forced to worship underground. In Nicaragua, the dictatorship has just forbidden Bibles from being brought into the country. Christians across much of the Middle East and South Asia are relegated to second-class citizens, harassed and discriminated against simply for professing their beliefs.

Even in Europe, nations with freedom of religion enshrined in their constitutions, Christians, who hold traditional biblical views on marriage, gender, and sexuality, have been convicted under so-called hate speech laws.

It is not only Christians who are persecuted globally. The Chinese Communist Party right now is committing a horrific genocide against Uyghurs. Ahmadi Muslims in Pakistan, Rohingya Muslims in Burma, Buddhists in Vietnam, and many more face severe restrictions on their religious freedom.

USCIRF gives Congress tools to confront persecution and protect religious freedom.

As Vice President VANCE said last year: Part of this country's moral leadership "means recognizing in our foreign policy the difference between regimes that respect religious freedom and those that do not."

USCIRF is a critical tool to that end.

I thank my colleague, Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, as well as Mr. SHERMAN of California, for leading this bipartisan effort. Mr. SMITH has been leading on this for many years.

Mr. Speaker, the bill advanced out of Committee unanimously, and I urge

my colleagues to join in advancing it on the floor today.

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

Mr. BERA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of this bill to reauthorize the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, or USCIRF, through fiscal year 2028.

Since its establishment 28 years ago, USCIRF has served as an independent, bipartisan watchdog monitoring conditions on the ground and providing policy recommendations to Congress and the administration.

Its work reinforces the principles reflected in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and helps ensure that our advocacy for religious freedom is consistent, credible, and universal.

True religious liberty cannot mean protection for only a favored few. It extends to all people.

A consistent defense of freedom of thought, consciousness, religion, and belief, or nonbelief, strengthens our voice globally and advances global stability, security, and prosperity.

When governments suppress religious belief, broader repression often follows. In many parts of the world, severe restrictions on religion are an early warning sign of authoritarian consolidation and instability.

Mr. Speaker, for these reasons, we need to reauthorize this commission so they can continue to do their good work.

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

Mr. MAST. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH), the chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I thank our very distinguished chairman for his strong leadership on religious freedom generally but for this legislation as well. I do appreciate that so much. I want to thank BRAD SHERMAN, who is the Democratic cosponsor, for his leadership in backing this important reauthorization of the United States International Religious Freedom Commission.

As I think Members know, USCIRF was created—the acronym we all use for the commission—by Congress to protect religious freedom through the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, a historic landmark law authored by Frank Wolf in 1998.

USCIRF's high-quality reporting and high-profile commissioners influence the State Department's work on religious freedom, and also provide Congress with insights with its incisive commentary, making all of the work that all of us do, especially State, more transparent, honest, and effective.

The Commission defends the universal right to freedom of religion abroad. It sponsors hearings, fact-finding trips, reviews reports from all comers, especially NGOs and others, religious communities who are, unfortu-

nately, being repressed in many countries of the world. They make very, very good recommendations that often are followed.

□ 1610

I also point out that I have probably chaired more than 700 hearings on human rights over the years. I have been here since the year 1980. I always want to have somebody from the commission there, always. They come. They give whatever—the name of the country. They give their insights after a great deal of due diligence. And what a difference that makes in terms of our understanding what is actually going on.

USCIRF commissioners are appointed by the President and the congressional leadership. There are nine of them of both parties, so it is totally bipartisan.

Last month, our former colleague, Vicky Hartzler, completed a distinguished term on the commission. None of you would be surprised to know that she was very active as the chair of the commission and did a magnificent job. She was appointed by Speaker JOHN-SON, as was Maureen Ferguson, who also just completed her term and did so with great distinction.

Again, I remind my colleagues, it was our very good friend, Frank Wolf, who, in 1998, with great legislative skill, commitment, and driving passion, drove the adoption of a singularly important human rights law, the International Religious Freedom Act, or IRFA. This law created a system for naming and taking action of what was now called Countries of Particular Concern, or CPCs.

History has shown that when the United States elevates religious freedom and that priority is conveyed to Countries of Particular Concern, conditions often change for the positive. Prisoners of conscience gain their freedom, and progress is made toward the free exercise of religious liberty.

As the author of the Frank Wolf International Religious Freedom Act of 2016, which updated Frank's legislation, I do follow the CPC recommendations very closely. In that law, we created entities of particular concern, like Boko Haram and some of these horrible organizations that kill people simply because of their faith.

The USCIRF acts as a true watchdog, recommending with incisive commentary that the State Department designated countries not leave somebody off because of political considerations. If they are committing human rights abuses against people of faith, they need to be held to account.

CPC is followed by a two-step process: first a designation, followed thereafter by sanctions, more than 18 of them prescribed into law. We are hoping that they won't be used. We want to see real reform and people protected like in China and elsewhere from people who wish them ill.

I again thank our Members, BRAD SHERMAN, GUS BILIRAKIS, HENRY

CUELLAR, and all the others who have supported this bill and ask my colleagues to support the legislation.

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

Mr. Speaker, reauthorizing USCIRF would ensure continuity in its important work. Protecting religious freedoms abroad advances both our values and interests, and it promotes stability and respect for fundamental rights. Join me in supporting this bill.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the right to freely exercise your religion without fear of persecution is an unalienable right that belongs to all people.

By passing this bill, the U.S. Congress is recommitting itself to that fundamental truth, that fundamental freedom.

I urge my colleagues to support this bipartisan bill, and I call upon the Senate to take up and pass H.R. 1744 as soon as possible.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MAST) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1744, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

The title of the bill was amended so as to read: "A bill to extend and authorize annual appropriations for the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom through December 31, 2028."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PROTECTING EUROPE FROM ANTISEMITIC CRIME AND EXTREMISM ACT

Mr. MAST. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6297) to require the Department of State to provide briefings on antisemitism in Europe, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6297

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 "Protecting Europe from Antisemitic Crime and Extremism Act" or the "PEACE Act".

SEC. 2. CONSULTATIONS ON ANTISEMITISM IN EUROPE.

(a) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that—

(1) the Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs, in consultation with other relevant officials of the Department of State, should assess the persistent and growing threat of antisemitism and acts of international terrorism in Europe as a matter of importance to the foreign policy of the United States; and