

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 15, 2014

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I write to express my concern about the vacancy of the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom post at the State Department.

The position has been vacant for over 6 months since the resignation of Suzan Johnson Cook. The Ambassador, as the head of the Office of International Religious Freedom (IRF Office), is the central U.S. government figure who promotes religious freedom throughout the world. The Office of International Religious Freedom monitors religious persecution and discrimination worldwide, recommends and implements policies, and develops programs to promote religious freedom. One of the most important tasks the IRF Office has is the publication of the Annual Report on International Religious Freedom. This report evaluates the status of religious freedom in 195 countries throughout the world. Additionally, the IRF Office advises the Secretary of State on the designation of nations who have committed particularly severe violations of religious freedom as "Countries of Particular Concern." This designation and the possible sanctions which are tied to it are the strongest tools we have to punish serial violators of this most basic right.

In your speech to the National Prayer Breakfast, you explained that "promoting religious freedom is a key objective of U.S. foreign policy" because it is in America's interest to promote universal human rights, including with our allies. In order to display the United States' dedication to religious freedom, we must have an Ambassador-at-Large in place to lead our efforts around the world. At a time when religious freedom is in jeopardy across the globe, the United States must continue to be the beacon of hope for all persecuted religious minorities.

I urge you to appoint a new Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom as soon as possible. This vacancy should be filled by a highly qualified individual who will fight to protect this God-given right wherever it is threatened around the globe.

Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Marco Rubio', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Marco Rubio
United States Senator