

## S 1798

United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Reauthorization Act of 2015

**Congress:** 114 (2015–2017, Ended)

**Chamber:** Senate

**Policy Area:** International Affairs

**Introduced:** Jul 16, 2015

**Current Status:** Read twice and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

**Latest Action:** Read twice and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations. (Jul 16, 2015)

**Official Text:** <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/senate-bill/1798>

### Sponsor

**Name:** Sen. Rubio, Marco [R-FL]

**Party:** Republican • **State:** FL • **Chamber:** Senate

### Cosponsors (4 total)

Cosponsor	Party / State	Role	Date Joined
Sen. Blunt, Roy [R-MO]	R · MO		Aug 3, 2015
Sen. Cotton, Tom [R-AR]	R · AR		Sep 15, 2015
Sen. Lankford, James [R-OK]	R · OK		Sep 22, 2015
Sen. Scott, Tim [R-SC]	R · SC		Nov 3, 2015

### Committee Activity

Committee	Chamber	Activity	Date
Foreign Relations Committee	Senate	Referred To	Jul 16, 2015

### Subjects & Policy Tags

#### Policy Area:

International Affairs

### Related Bills

Bill	Relationship	Last Action
114 HR 2037	Related bill	<b>May 20, 2015:</b> Referred to the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights and International Organizations.

## **United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Reauthorization Act of 2015**

Amends the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 to reauthorize the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) as an independent federal government advisory body through FY2021.

Requires the President's annual review of the status of religious freedom in each foreign country to include determinations regarding religious freedom violations being engaged in or tolerated in territories in which a government does not exist or does not exercise control. Directs the President to designate nonstate actors that have engaged in particularly severe violations as entities of particular concern for religious freedom.

Requires USCIRF as a whole to have expertise on the variety of faiths practiced around the world.

Requires appointments to USCIRF to be made not later than 90 days after the creation of a vacancy.

Directs USCIRF, during its first meeting after May 30, 2016, to elect: (1) as Chair, a Commissioner appointed by an elected official of the political party of the President; and (2) as Vice Chair, a Commissioner appointed by an elected official of the political party that is not the political party of the President (or on the occasion of two Vice Chairs, one Vice Chair appointed by an elected official of the President's party and the other Vice Chair appointed by an elected official of the other party). Sets forth a process for future elections in which the positions of Chair and Vice Chair rotate annually between Commissioners appointed by elected officials of each political party.

Allows the Ambassador at Large to attend all meetings as a nonvoting member.

Removes authority under which a USCIRF member may serve after the expiration of that member's term until a successor has taken office.

Requires (currently, allows) USCIRF to hold hearings, take actions and testimony, and receive evidence.

Requires USCIRF to conduct an annual review of the Executive Director.

Directs USCIRF to work with the Executive Director to establish internal hiring practices for professional staff.

Encourages the Department of State to allow classified information to be accessed by USCIRF Commissioners and staff with the appropriate security clearance.

Prohibits Commissioners from permitting any person, entity, or special interest group, including foreign governments and state-owned enterprises, to inappropriately influence or pose a conflict of interest with a Commissioner's official duties. Requires Commissioners to recuse themselves from related discussions or decisions if such an inappropriate influence or conflict is discovered.

Revises restrictions on USCIRF's acceptance of gifts and donations to permit sponsoring private parties to provide compensation and benefits to interns, fellows, and volunteers under specified conditions.

Amends the Foreign Service Act of 1980 to require the State Department to receive assistance from USCIRF when establishing training for Foreign Service officers in the field of internationally recognized human rights, including instruction regarding the relationship between religious freedom and security, as well as the role of religious freedom in U.S. foreign policy.

## Actions Timeline

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- **Jul 16, 2015:** Introduced in Senate
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