

House Resolution 194  
Proponent Testimony  
House State and Local Government  
May 18, 2022  
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Chairman Wiggam, vice chair John, ranking member Kelly and members of the State and Local Government committee, thank you for providing the opportunity to testify in support of House Resolution 194, to encourage the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom to take measures to add our neighbor to the north, Canada, to the “Special Watch List” of countries that violate the religious liberty of their citizens. I am here today representing the Institute for Principled Policy, a non-profit think tank promoting Biblical principles for public policy.

One of the key foundational supports of our American Constitutional republic is the recognition and support of the exercise of sincerely-held religious belief among the citizens. In fact, HR194 specifically points out our long history of acknowledging this fundamental right that is outside the sphere of governmental action, both as a nation and within our own state’s foundational documents.

In the immediate past few months we have witnessed, from afar, what governmental infringement on religious rights can look like. During the worldwide COVID pandemic and response, the government of Canada decided to insert themselves into the operation of the church, with shocking results: churches being shut down and locked by government

officials, cordon lines and fencing erected to keep both parishioners and pastors off their own property, and arrests and imprisonment of pastors for preaching outside of government-approved messaging.

This dystopian nightmare has been played out in many places in their country, in contravention of their nation's own Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We have even seen, although tempered by both thoughtful public officials and in some cases by the courts needing to intervene, the same spirit of authoritarianism begin to grow in our own country. A number of cases in states such as California and Louisiana had to have the courts intervene in order to preserve a number of our First Amendment rights.

This resolution puts Ohio on record as standing firm on the foundations of not only our American First Amendment rights, but of the natural rights of religious freedom that is vital to world order. Standing vigilant and calling out the errors of neighbor, trading partner and fellow North American country is not only the right thing to do, but necessary to prevent the impulse toward dictatorial government.

We look forward to seeing this committee move this resolution forward to the full House for adoption. Thank you for your attention, and I would be happy to try to address any questions you may have.