

As Adopted by the House

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H. R. No. 194

Representatives Stoltzfus, Ginter

Cosponsors: Representatives Bird, Click, Ferguson, Gross, Hall, Johnson, Powell, Riedel, Schmidt, White, Young, B., Wiggam, John, Creech, Dean, Fowler Arthur, Baldrige, Carruthers, Ghanbari, Grendell, Holmes, Hoops, Jordan, Kick, Koehler, LaRe, McClain, Merrin, Pavliga, Richardson, Roemer, Stein, Stephens, Stevens, Stewart, Swearingen

A R E S O L U T I O N

To urge the United States Commission on 1
International Religious Freedom to take whatever 2
action is necessary to address and rectify the 3
situation described in this resolution, and 4
consider adding Canada to the Special Watch List 5
of countries where the government engages in 6
violations of religious freedom. 7

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF OHIO:

WHEREAS, The citizens of Ohio are citizens of the United 8
States, which by its nature is a country of religious freedom 9
free of government interference; and 10

WHEREAS, Civilized societies normative structures show 11
churches to have jurisdictions separate from civil authorities, 12
with the civil authorities having no authority in church 13
governance, courts, preaching, or sacraments; and 14

WHEREAS, The first line of the First Amendment of the Bill 15

of Rights states that "Congress shall make no law respecting an
establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise
thereof," thus upholding freedom of religion as one of our most
sacred of Rights; and

WHEREAS, The founders themselves elaborated upon and
celebrated religious freedom in their writings; and

WHEREAS, Thomas Jefferson in his letter to the Danbury
Baptist Convention, said "Believing with you that religion is a
matter which lies solely between Man & his God, that he owes
account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the
legitimate powers of government reach actions only, & not
opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the
whole American people which declared that their legislature
should "make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or
prohibiting the free exercise thereof," thus building a wall of
separation between Church & State. Adhering to this expression
of the supreme will of the nation in behalf of the rights of
conscience, I shall see with sincere satisfaction the progress
of those sentiments which tend to restore to man all his natural
rights, convinced he has no natural right in opposition to his
social duties"; and

WHEREAS, Roger Williams, founder of Rhode Island, believed
that any government involvement in the church would corrupt the
church and coined the term "separation of church and state" to
keep the church safe from government interference; and

WHEREAS, The State of Ohio itself was founded upon similar
premises from its inception as a part of the Northwest
Territory; and

WHEREAS, The Northwest Ordinance stated in its first
article, "No person, demeaning himself in a peaceable and
orderly manner, shall ever be molested on account of his mode of
worship or religious sentiments in the said territory"; and

WHEREAS, The Northwest Ordinance stated in its third 48
article, "Religion, morality and knowledge, being necessary to 49
good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the 50
means of education shall forever be encouraged"; and 51

WHEREAS, The Ohio Constitution's Bill of Rights states in 52
Article I Section 7, "All men have a natural and indefeasible 53
right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their 54
own conscience. No person shall be compelled to attend, erect, 55
or support any place of worship, or maintain any form of 56
worship, against his consent; and no preference shall be given, 57
by law, to any religious society; nor shall any interference 58
with the rights of conscience be permitted. No religious test 59
shall be required, as a qualification for office, nor shall any 60
person be incompetent to be a witness on account of his 61
religious belief; but nothing herein shall be construed to 62
dispense with oaths and affirmations. Religion, morality, and 63
knowledge, however, being essential to good government, it shall 64
be the duty of the general assembly to pass suitable laws to 65
protect every religious denomination in the peaceable enjoyment 66
of its own mode of public worship, and to encourage schools and 67
the means of instruction"; and 68

WHEREAS, The citizens of Ohio have a robust system of local 69
religious charity systems; and 70

WHEREAS, The citizens of Ohio have stood against injustices 71
throughout our history; and 72

WHEREAS, During the American Civil War, to help rid the 73
nation of the injustice of slavery, the State of Ohio provided 74
the United States government with more than two hundred sixty 75
regiments, upwards of three hundred thousand men, including the 76
prominent Generals McDowell, Buell, Sheridan, McClellan, 77
Sherman, and future President Ulysses S. Grant; and 78

WHEREAS, Ohio abolitionists played a prominent role in the 79

Underground Railroad, helping thousands escape the bondage of 80
slavery to find freedom, such as our involvement in the 81
abolition of slavery in the North; and 82

WHEREAS, We, the members of the House of Representatives of 83
the 134th General Assembly of the State of Ohio, are the State 84
representative body of such a freedom-loving people; and 85

WHEREAS, During the COVID-19 emergency, the government of 86
Ohio stood up for religious liberty and exempted religious 87
services from COVID-19 restrictions; and 88

WHEREAS, The State of Ohio has a vested interest in the 89
affairs of Canada, being our neighbor to the North and Ohio's 90
number one trading partner in the world in both imports and 91
exports; and 92

WHEREAS, Ohio's exports to Canada benefit many segments of 93
the economy, and thousands of individual companies, on both 94
sides of the border; and 95

WHEREAS, Indeed Ohio is not alone in valuing freedom. The 96
Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms states that "Everyone 97
has the following fundamental freedoms," which include the 98
"freedom of conscience and religion." The arrests and actions 99
described below, taken to enforce overly burdensome and 100
unjustified orders, however, do not seem to live up to this 101
praiseworthy statement; and 102

WHEREAS, We, the members of the House of Representatives of 103
the 134th General Assembly of the State of Ohio, have taken note 104
of the abuses of religious liberty that have gone on throughout 105
the Provinces of Canada during the COVID-19 pandemic; and 106

WHEREAS, Pastor James Coates of Edmonton, Alberta was 107
jailed for thirty-five days and in solitary confinement for 108
seven days straight for holding religious services at a capacity 109
not in keeping with the Public Health Act; and 110

WHEREAS, Brothers Artur and David Pawlowski, pastors from 111
Alberta, Canada were arrested and spent three days in jail for 112
organizing a church service that ignored COVID-19 social 113
distancing rules and mask mandates; and 114

Whereas, Pastor Coates, and perhaps other Canadian pastors, 115
have held services in undisclosed locations, essentially going 116
underground, in order to avoid persecution by government 117
authorities, and to allay congregant's fears; and 118

WHEREAS, Pastor Tobias Tissen of Steinbach, Manitoba, was 119
arrested for holding an outdoor service that violated a health 120
order that prohibited gatherings of more than five people; and 121

WHEREAS, Under Province of Alberta health orders, in-person 122
faith group meetings, and other religious gatherings, have been 123
prohibited in private homes while the emergency is in effect, 124
thus intruding into the most sacred liberties of its citizens, 125
those of religious freedom and privacy; and 126

WHEREAS, All of the Canadian provinces have at times 127
prohibited religious gatherings outright, or have limited the 128
size of religious gatherings, and many provinces still have 129
severe size limitations on religious gatherings either held 130
indoors or outdoors, punishable by harassment, fines, and jail 131
time of faith leaders, thus limiting the parishioners' or 132
members' ability to attend the assembly of their choice, and 133
generally limiting religious liberty; and 134

WHEREAS, On December 8, 2021, Canada's Senate Bill C-4 135
received royal assent and became law. This act is overly broad 136
in scope and has potential negative implications for religious 137
liberties and expression, including a prison sentence of up to 138
five years for merely expressing a biblical view of marriage, 139
thus restricting the ability of religious leaders from 140
expressing sincerely held religious beliefs on marriage and 141
sexuality; and 142

WHEREAS, In 1998, the Congress of the United States 143
established the United States Commission on International 144
Religious Freedom; and 145

WHEREAS, The Commission includes members appointed by the 146
President of the United States, by the President Pro Tempore of 147
the United States Senate, and by the Speaker of the United 148
States House of Representatives; and 149

WHEREAS, The purpose of the Commission, as enumerated in 150
federal law, in part, is to consider and recommend options for 151
policies of the United States government with respect to each 152
foreign country the government of which has engaged in or 153
tolerated violations of religious freedom; and 154

WHEREAS, The Commission maintains a Special Watch List of 155
countries where the government engages in or tolerates "severe" 156
violations of religious freedom; now therefore be it 157

RESOLVED, That we, the members of the House of 158
Representatives of the 134th General Assembly of the State of 159
Ohio, urge the United States Commission on International 160
Religious Freedom to take whatever action is necessary to 161
address and rectify the situation, described in this resolution, 162
and consider adding Canada to the Special Watch List; and be it 163
further 164

RESOLVED, That the Clerk of the House of Representatives 165
transmit duly authenticated copies of this resolution to each 166
commissioner of the United States Commission on International 167
Religious Freedom, the President of the United States, the 168
President Pro Tempore of the United States Senate, the Speaker 169
of the United States House of Representatives, each member of 170
the Ohio Congressional delegation, the Prime Minister of Canada, 171
the Speaker of the House of Commons of Canada, the Speaker of 172
the Senate of Canada, and the news media of Ohio. 173