

**As Introduced**

**134th General Assembly  
Regular Session  
2021-2022**

**H. R. No. 194**

**Representatives Stoltzfus, Ginter**

**Cosponsors: Representatives Bird, Click, Ferguson, Gross, Hall, Johnson,  
Powell, Riedel, Schmidt, White, Young, B.**

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**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 16  
establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise 17  
thereof," thus upholding freedom of religion as one of our most 18

sacred of Rights; and 19

WHEREAS, The founders themselves elaborated upon and 20  
celebrated religious freedom in their writings; and 21

WHEREAS, Thomas Jefferson in his letter to the Danbury 22  
Baptist Convention, said "Believing with you that religion is a 23  
matter which lies solely between Man & his God, that he owes 24  
account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the 25  
legitimate powers of government reach actions only, & not 26  
opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the 27  
whole American people which declared that their legislature 28  
should "make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or 29  
prohibiting the free exercise thereof," thus building a wall of 30  
separation between Church & State. Adhering to this expression 31  
of the supreme will of the nation in behalf of the rights of 32  
conscience, I shall see with sincere satisfaction the progress 33  
of those sentiments which tend to restore to man all his natural 34  
rights, convinced he has no natural right in opposition to his 35  
social duties"; and 36

WHEREAS, Roger Williams, founder of Rhode Island, believed 37  
that any government involvement in the church would corrupt the 38  
church and coined the term "separation of church and state" to 39  
keep the church safe from government interference; and 40

WHEREAS, The State of Ohio itself was founded upon similar 41  
premises from its inception as a part of the Northwest 42  
Territory; and 43

WHEREAS, The Northwest Ordinance stated in its first 44  
article, "No person, demeaning himself in a peaceable and 45  
orderly manner, shall ever be molested on account of his mode of 46  
worship or religious sentiments in the said territory"; and 47

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 means of education shall forever be encouraged"; and

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, Ohio abolitionists played a prominent role in the Underground Railroad, helping thousands escape the bondage of slavery to find freedom, such as our involvement in the

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 Religious Freedom; and

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

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

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

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

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