

House vote critical of China's human rights record_32204

March 12, 2004

Posted: 3/12/04

House vote critical of China's human rights record

WASHINGTON (BP)—The U.S. House of Representatives and a bipartisan criticize China's human rights commission have called on the Bush administration to promote a resolution at a United Nations conference insisting China halt its violations of human rights.

The House voted 402-2 for a resolution urging the U.S. representative at the upcoming U.N. Commission on Human Rights to lead an effort to adopt a measure calling on China to meet the international community's standards on human rights.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom endorsed the House's call for the resolution.

"The overwhelming vote by Congress is important because the administration has yet to declare whether it will offer a China resolution at Geneva," USCIRF Chairman Michael Young said in a written release.

"While U.S.-Chinese relations are advancing in other important areas, our dialogue on human rights is stagnant, and they have yet to demonstrate a willingness to abide by international human rights norms."

H.R. 530 also called on the Beijing government to end religious

persecution, halt forced abortion and sterilization in all provinces, stop the coerced return of refugees to North Korea and grant religious freedom to all citizens.

Among other requests, the House also urged the Chinese government to permit unrestricted visits to the country by the USCIRF and other international groups.

The USCIRF's plans to send a delegation to China were thwarted twice in the last year by Beijing-invoked limitations on its trip the panel found unacceptable.

The only House members voting against the resolution March 3 were Reps. Ron Paul (R-Texas) and Jim McDermott (D-Wash).

The U.N. Commission on Human Rights is meeting March 15 to April 23 in Geneva, Switzerland.

China is among six countries designated by the State Department as "countries of particular concern" in regard to religious liberty and human rights violations. Chinese policy requires churches to register with the government. China's repressive practices, which have included arrest, imprisonment and torture, have affected not only Protestants but also Catholics, Muslims, Tibetan Buddhists and the Falun Gong sect.

The USCIRF makes reports and policy recommendations to Congress and the White House. The president and congressional leaders appoint the nine members who serve as commissioners.

President Bush appointed Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, to the panel in 2001. Land's second one-year term will expire in May.

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Texas Baptist churches, in the BGCT, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and around the world.