

Brownback nominated again for international religious freedom ambassador

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WASHINGTON—President Trump nominated Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback—once again—as ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom Jan. 8.

It marked the second time in six months Trump nominated Brownback, a former senator, to fill the post left vacant since David Saperstein stepped down nearly a year ago.

Since the [Senate failed to vote](#) on his nomination before its Christmas recess, Trump had to resubmit the nomination. U.S. Senate Rule 31 requires senators to agree unanimously to continue considering nominees at the end of a year.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee may or may not hold hearings again, but the committee must vote again before he can be considered by the Senate.

‘Crucial time’ for action

Nate Lance, advocacy manager for International Christian Concern, commended the Trump Administration for making the nomination and urged the Senate to move forward.

“Now is a crucial time for the U.S. government to act swiftly to fill the position and implement strong policies that will intervene on behalf of religious minorities,” Lance said. “It is ICC’s desire to see the former

governor act quickly on the commitments he made while working to secure the position. We look forward to working with him to further the cause of freedom of religion or belief.”

Randel Everett, president of the [21st Century Wilberforce Initiative](#), pointed to dramatic examples of international religious freedom violations that have occurred in the past year.

The People’s Armed Police in China destroyed the Golden Lampstand Church in Sanxi Province on Jan. 9, he said. In recent months, 650,000 Rohingya Muslims have fled Myanmar into Bangladesh to escape what some human rights advocates term “ethnic cleaning,” he added.

“Millions continue to be displaced, thousands have been captured and killed in the Middle East and in Northern Nigeria as a result of religious violence,” said Everett, former executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

“While Congress plays games of partisan politics leaving the position of U.S. ambassador for international religious freedom unfilled, 77 percent of the world continues to live under religious persecution and oppression.”

Before Brownback was elected governor, he served in the U.S. Senate from 1996 to 2011, after having served in the U.S. House of Representatives in 1995-96. During his time in the Senate, he was co-sponsor of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998. He also was co-chair of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus.

Russell Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Convention’s Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, and representatives of several other conservative Christian groups backed Brownback’s nomination.

However, the Council on American-Islamic Relations criticized Brownback for his support of a 2012 anti-Sharia law bill, which prohibits state courts

and agencies from using Islamic law in rendering decisions. Gay rights groups took issue with Brownback for signing an executive order that reversed a previous order barring discrimination against LGBT state workers.

Editor's Note: *The Senate Foreign Relations Committee is scheduled to vote on Brownback's nomination Jan. 18.*