

# Perkins appointed to international religious freedom panel

May 18, 2018

WASHINGTON (RNS)—Tony Perkins, the head of the conservative Christian lobbying group Family Research Council, has been appointed to a U.S. government commission dedicated to “defending the universal right to freedom of religion or belief abroad.”

Perkins was appointed to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom on the recommendation of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky.

The USCIRF is an independent, bipartisan U.S. federal government commission created in 1998 through the passage of the International Religious Freedom Act. The commission issues an annual report on international religious freedom issues.

“I am grateful to Majority Leader McConnell for appointing me to this prestigious position. From my post at USCIRF, I look forward to doing all that I can to ensure that our government is the single biggest defender of religious freedom internationally,” said Perkins, an evangelical Christian and frequent faith adviser to President Trump’s administration.

Perkins expressed particular interest in addressing religious freedom issues in nations that top the commission’s list of “Countries of Particular Concern,” saying, “It is my hope that through the work of USCIRF, the world will become one step closer to recognizing the vital role religious freedom and the defense of religious minorities play in peace, security and human flourishing.”

Perkins intends to remain president of the Family Research Council during his two-year term on the commission.

The Southern Poverty Law Center has labeled the Family Research Council an anti-LGBT hate group, although Perkins and the council dispute the label.

Perkins has been a consistent supporter of Trump, telling *Politico* in January he and other evangelical Christians gave the president a “mulligan” for past behavior that may have been at odds with conservative Christian values.