

Senate unanimously urges repeal of blasphemy laws

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WASHINGTON—The U.S. Senate joined the House of Representatives in passing a resolution calling for a global repeal of blasphemy, heresy and apostasy laws.

The Senate on Dec. 19 unanimously approved [Senate Resolution 458](#), spearheaded by Sen. James Lankford, R-Okla., and Sen. Chris Coons, D-Del.



Sen. James
Lankford

“The right to live your faith is one of the most basic human rights,” said Lankford, a Southern Baptist. “We should not turn a blind eye to the mistreatment of religious minorities across the globe when we have the responsibility to advance our core value to have a faith, live a faith, change your faith, or have no faith at all. We are standing for and with those who cannot speak for themselves.”

The Senate resolution not only calls for the repeal of blasphemy laws, but also urges countries “that have prosecuted, imprisoned and persecuted people on charges of blasphemy, heresy or apostasy to release such people unconditionally and, once released, to ensure their safety and that of their families.”

The resolution notes Pakistan, Iran, Russia, India, Egypt, Indonesia, Yemen, Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait account for more than 8 out of 10 reported cases of state criminal blasphemy enforcement.

On Dec. 7, the [U.S. House of Representatives voted](#) 386-3 to approve House Resolution 512, its own bipartisan resolution calling for a global repeal of blasphemy, heresy and apostasy laws. Rep. Jamie Raskin, D-Md., was lead sponsor of the House resolution.

“It is encouraging to see overwhelming bipartisan support in both the House and Senate in declaring blasphemy and apostasy laws as harmful to religious freedom,” said Jennifer Hawks, associate general counsel of the [Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty](#).

“Blasphemy laws still exist in more than 80 countries, so the work continues as we stand with our global neighbors seeking faith freedom for all.”