

August 13, 1999: McFarland Selected Executive Director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 13, 1999 Contact:

Jeff Mandell, (202) 387-2800

(WASHINGTON) -- The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom today named Steven T. McFarland as its executive director. Mr. McFarland currently serves as the Director of the Christian Legal Society's Center for Law and Religious Freedom. For the past eight and one-half years, Mr. McFarland has led the Christian Legal Society's litigation and lobbying efforts on behalf of religious liberty for all faiths. A recognized scholar in the field of free exercise and establishment clause jurisprudence, Mr. McFarland led the CLRF's efforts to defend the rights of all religious groups, successfully litigating on behalf of Protestants, Catholics, Jews, and numerous other minority faith communities. Mr. McFarland has also been a leader of a number of broad based religious coalitions. He helped lead the Coalition for the Free Exercise of Religion, a group comprised of over 80 national religious and civil liberties organizations -- including those representing the Christian, Jewish, Moslem, Buddhist, and Sikh communities, -- in their efforts to shepherd the Religious Freedom Restoration Act to passage in 1993, and the Religious Liberty Protection Act, which overwhelmingly passed the House of Representatives in July of this year. On behalf of similarly broad coalitions, Mr. McFarland was one of the principal authors of several recent joint religious freedom documents, including two later adopted by President Clinton as guidelines for protecting both religious freedom in America's public schools and the religious freedom rights of the two million U.S. federal workers. Rabbi David Saperstein, Chair of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, where Mr. McFarland will soon work, commented: "Having worked closely with Steve McFarland for almost nine years now, I have seen first hand his immense skills as a coalition builder, his tenacious ability to bring tasks to completion, his brilliant legal mind, and the inordinate respect he is accorded by members of Congress and the Administration with whom he has worked on a bipartisan basis. In Mr. McFarland, the Commission has selected a professional of vision and determination who will make an indispensable contribution to the vital and urgent work of the Commission." Mr. McFarland will assume his responsibilities at the Commission beginning September 7, 1999.

Rabbi David Saperstein, Chair

- Dean Michael K. Young, Vice Chair Hon. Elliott Abrams Laila Al-Marayati, M.D. Hon. John R. Bolton Firuz Kazemzadeh Archbishop Theodore E. McCarrick Nina Shea Justice Charles Z. Smith Ambassador Robert Seiple, Ex-Officio Steven T. McFarland, Executive Director