

## February 12, 2008: USCIRF Mourns Death of Rep. Tom Lantos

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WASHINGTON-The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom mourns the death of Rep. Tom Lantos (D-CA), an eloquent champion of human rights and a determined advocate for advancing the freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief around the world.

"Rep. Lantos combined a nobility of purpose with an unwavering commitment to translating ideals into practical action," said Commission Chair Michael Cromartie. "We, along with so many around the world, will sorely miss his support, friendship, and leadership in the human rights field."

As Chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and as a co-founder and Co-Chair of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus, Rep. Lantos was one of the most vital voices on Capitol Hill for the promotion of human rights in U.S. foreign policy. "Despite the many demands on the time and attention of such a senior member of Congress, victims of human rights abuses could consistently rely upon Rep. Lantos to be an advocate for freedom," Cromartie said. "Rep. Lantos never hesitated to speak on behalf of those with no political voice."

Rep. Lantos was a longtime partner in the work of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, a bipartisan body he helped bring to life through his support for the 1998 International Religious Freedom Act, landmark legislation that defined the importance of advancing religious freedom and associated human rights in American foreign policy.

"Rep. Lantos had the unique ability to inspire broad support for vitally needed rights measures that transcended party lines," said Commissioner Felice D. Gaer. "His background as a Holocaust survivor and American immigrant enabled him to shape America's human rights policies with unique empathy, determination, and effectiveness. We were so fortunate to have his powerful moral and political leadership in shaping foreign affairs. His absence is an immeasurable loss to the advocates of freedom worldwide."

The Commission extends its deepest condolences to Rep. Lantos' wife, Annette, and the rest of his family.

