

August 20, 2008: Commission Welcomes James D. Standish as Executive Director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 20, 2008

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WASHINGTON — The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, an independent, bipartisan federal agency advising the Administration and Congress, today announced the appointment of James D. Standish as its new Executive Director.

“The Commission warmly welcomes James Standish,” stated Commission Chair Felice D. Gaer. “Mr. Standish’s academic and professional background in human rights and religious freedom advocacy has made him a respected leader, both on Capitol Hill and among the widely varying constituencies whose causes he has represented.”

Prior to his arrival at the Commission, Mr. Standish served as Director of Legislative Affairs at the Seventh-day Adventist Church World Headquarters for seven years. During that time, Mr. Standish represented fifteen million Church members on Capitol Hill and on official visits to Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and Australia.

“It is an honor to join the Commission, particularly as we approach the tenth anniversary of the creation of the International Religious Freedom Act, legislation that affirmed the importance of religious freedom promotion in U.S. foreign policy,” said Mr. Standish. “The magnitude and severity of violations of the universal right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion worldwide cannot be understated. I am honored to join the Commission as it addresses some of world’s most pressing human rights crises.”

Mr. Standish is widely published, has discussed religious freedom issues on nationally broadcast television and radio, and has testified on religious freedom matters before the United States House of Representatives. “Mr. Standish brings to the Commission critical experience in both grassroots advocacy and a publication history that speaks to his impressive, non-partisan ability to approach issues of religious freedom from political, legal, and theoretical perspectives,” Ms. Gaer noted.

Mr. Standish received his undergraduate degree from Newbold College in England, a M.B.A. from the University of Virginia and a J.D., cum laude, from Georgetown University. He is a member of the Bar of Virginia State and the District of Columbia, and has been admitted to practice before the U.S. Supreme Court and the Fourth Circuit.

Mr. Standish succeeds Joseph R. Crapa, who served as Executive Director of the Commission from 2003–2007, until his untimely death last October.

The Commission, established by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (IRFA), monitors violations of the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief abroad, as defined in IRFA and set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related international instruments. It provides independent policy recommendations to the President, Secretary of State, and Congress, and is the first government commission in the world with the sole mission of reviewing and making policy recommendations on the facts and circumstances of violations of religious freedom globally.

The Commission is comprised of nine Congressional and Presidential appointees: Felice D. Gaer, Chair; Michael Cromartie, Vice Chair; Dr. Elizabeth H. Prodromou, Vice Chair; Dr. Don Argue; Preeti D. Bansal; Imam Talal Y. Eid; Dr. Richard D. Land; Leonard A. Leo; and Nina Shea. John V. Hanford III is the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom.

