

## November 19, 2002: Commission Welcomes Joseph R. Crapa as Executive Director

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WASHINGTON - The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, an independent federal agency advising the Administration and Congress, today announced the appointment of Joseph R. Crapa as its new Executive Director. Mr. Crapa brings to the position a wealth of experience in the Executive Branch and on Capitol Hill. He has worked for more than 25 years in the Congress and the Administration, holding high level policy and administrative positions.

"The Commission is delighted to welcome Joe Crapa. He has extensive and highly regarded administrative and bipartisan public policymaking experience on Capitol Hill. His significant service in the Executive Branch, his impressive managerial experience, and his strong interest in promoting religious freedom around the world should make him an outstanding Executive Director," said Commission Chair Felice D. Gaer.

Prior to coming to the Commission, Mr. Crapa served as Chief of Staff for Senator Charles E. Schumer, the senior Senator from New York. Before that, Mr. Crapa spent four years as an official in the Executive Branch from 1997-2001, where he was nominated by President Clinton and confirmed by the Senate to serve as an Assistant Administrator at the U.S. Agency for International Development. He also held senior positions at the Department of Agriculture and the Environmental Protection Agency where his portfolio included Congressional Relations and Public Affairs.

"It is a great tribute to the Congress," according to Mr. Crapa, "that it has had the vision to create and continue to strongly support the Commission. My role will be to assist the Commissioners in their critical task of promoting international religious freedom as an important part of our foreign policy considerations. I look forward to working with the Commission in a bipartisan manner to advocate religious tolerance and positive changes for those who suffer oppression because of their faith. I believe it is one of the finest things we as Americans can do and I'm proud to join the Commissioners in this effort."

Mr. Crapa has extensive experience dealing with foreign and domestic policy issues. For ten years he served as Chief of Staff for Rep. David Obey (D-WI) and also as Democratic counsel to the House Appropriations Committee.

"The Commission also extends its highest regard and appreciation to Tad Stahnke, who served as Acting Executive Director while our search was in progress. He is a highly valued resource whose outstanding talents and many contributions are a key and decisive factor to the ongoing success of the Commission," Gaer said.

Crapa graduated from Cathedral College Preparatory Seminary, received a B.A. from St. John's University, went on to earn his M.A. from Duke University, and his Ph.D. at the University of Arizona where he was a National Defense Teaching Fellow.

Felice D. Gaer, Chair

- Dean Michael K. Young, Vice Chair Firuz Kazemzadeh Richard D. Land Bishop William Francis Murphy Leila Nadya Sadat Nina Shea The Hon. Charles R. Stith The Hon. Shirin Tahir-Kheli Joseph R. Crapa, Executive Director