

July 21, 2003: USCIRF: Michael K. Young elected Chair; Felice D. Gaer and Nina Shea elected Vice Chairs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WASHINGTON - The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), an independent and bipartisan federal agency advising the Administration and Congress, has elected Dean Michael K. Young to serve as Chair. Commissioner Young succeeds Felice D. Gaer, who was elected Vice Chair together with Nina Shea. The election follows the Commission's practice of alternating the post of Chair yearly between Democratic and Republican appointees. The Chair is chosen by the Commissioners themselves. Commissioner Young is dean of the George Washington University Law School. Prior to that, he was the Fuyo Professor of Japanese Law and Legal Institutions at the Columbia University School of Law. At Columbia, he also served as Director of the Center for Japanese Legal Studies, the Center for Korean Legal Studies, and the Project on Religion, Rights and Religious Freedom. Dean Young has been a Visiting Professor and Scholar at the Law Faculties of the University of Tokyo, Waseda University and Nihon University. He has also been a Japan Foundation Fellow at Columbia University. During the Administration of President George H. W. Bush, he served as Ambassador for Trade and Environmental Affairs, Deputy Under Secretary for Economic and Agricultural Affairs, and Deputy Legal Advisor to the U.S. Department of State. He currently serves as a member of the Brown v. Board of Education 50th Anniversary Commission and the Trade and Environmental Policy Committee, Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, Executive Office of the President. Commissioner Gaer is the Director of the Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights of the American Jewish Committee. She is a member of the Committee Against Torture, a United Nations treaty monitoring body that reviews governmental compliance with the Convention Against Torture. Nominated by the United States and elected in 1999, she is the first American to serve on the Committee. Felice Gaer was appointed as a public member of nine U.S. delegations to UN human rights negotiations between 1993 and 1999, including the UN Commission on Human Rights, the World Conference on Women, and the World Conference on Human Rights. She is also a member of the steering committee of Human Rights Watch/Europe and Central Asia and the International Human Rights Council of the Carter Center. Ms. Gaer is the author of more than 25 articles on international human rights topics. In 1995, she was awarded the Alumnae Achievement Award from Wellesley College. Commissioner Shea is the Director of the Center for Religious Freedom of Freedom House in Washington, D.C. She has been an international human rights lawyer for 25 years and has for 18 years focused specifically on the issue of religious persecution. Before her appointment to this Commission, on which she has served from the beginning, Ms. Shea served on the Advisory Committee on Religious Freedom to the U.S. Secretary of State. She has organized and sponsored numerous fact-finding missions to Sudan, China, Egypt, and elsewhere and has testified regularly before Congress about the governments of these countries. She is the author of *In the Lion's Den*, a book on anti-Christian persecution around the world. She was appointed as a public delegate on the U.S. delegation to the UN Commission on Human Rights in 2001.

Dean Michael K. Young, Chair

- Felice D. Gaer, Vice Chair Nina Shea, Vice Chair Preeta Bansal Richard Land Bishop William F. Murphy Bishop Ricardo Ramirez Leila Nadya Sadat Ambassador John V. Hanford III, Ex-Officio Joseph R. Crapa, Executive Director