

July 1, 2005: USCIRF elects Michael Cromartie as Chair, Felice Gaer and Nina Shea as Vice Chairs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 1, 2005 Contact:

Anne Johnson, Director of Communications, (202) 523-3240, ext. 27 WASHINGTON - The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has elected Michael Cromartie, Vice President of the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, DC, to serve as Chair for 2005-2006. The Commission also re-elected Felice D. Gaer and Nina Shea to serve as Vice Chairs. Mr. Cromartie will succeed Commissioner Preeta D. Bansal as Chair. 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.

At the Ethics and Public Policy Center, Cromartie directs the Evangelicals in Civic Life program and the Media and Religion program. He is also a Senior Advisor to The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life in Washington. The Ethics and Public Policy Center was established in 1976 to clarify and reinforce the bond between the Judeo-Christian moral tradition and domestic and foreign policy issues. He is the host of Radio America's weekly show "Faith and Life," an adjunct professor at Reformed Theological Seminary, an advisory editor at Christianity Today, on the Board of Directors of Mars Hill Audio, and was an advisor to the PBS documentary series "With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Christian Right in America." He is the editor of 14 books on religion and public policy, including, most recently, Religion, Culture, and International Conflict (Rowman & Littlefield). He holds an M.A. in Justice from The American University and a B.A. from Covenant College in Georgia. Commissioner Felice D. Gaer is the Director of the Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights of the American Jewish Committee. She is Vice Chair of the Committee Against Torture, an official United Nations treaty monitoring body that reviews governmental compliance with the Convention Against Torture, to which she was first elected in 1999. Gaer is also a Vice President of the International League for Human Rights and a member of the steering committee of Human Rights Watch/Europe and Central Asia. Ms. Gaer is the author of more than 30 articles on international human rights topics. In 1995, she was awarded the Alumnae Achievement Award from Wellesley College. Ms. 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. Commissioner Nina Shea is the Director of the Center for Religious Freedom House in Washington, D.C. She has been an international human rights lawyer for 25 years and has for 19 years focused specifically on the issue of religious persecution. She is a co-author of a newly-released book on governance by extreme sharia, *Radical Islam's Rules* (Rowman & Littlefield) and the author of a widely acclaimed book on anti-Christian persecution around the world entitled *In the Lion's Den* (Broadman & Holman Publishers). In 2005, she edited a path-breaking report on publications by the government of Saudi Arabia promoting an ideology of hate in America. Ms. Shea has also written on religious freedom and other human rights issues for the Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Weekly Standard, National Review and other publications. She has been one of the activists at the forefront of a movement to make religious freedom abroad a U.S. foreign policy priority. It was a conference that Ms. Shea organized under Freedom House auspices in January 1996 that brought 100 top Christian leaders together for the first time to address the issue of worldwide anti-Christian persecution. This marked the beginning of an interfaith coalition she has played a key leadership role in that has turned into a nationwide movement to advance religious freedom worldwide. In a profile of her, *Newsweek* magazine credited her with "making Christian persecution Washington's hottest cause." In 2005 she was presented the John Leland Religious Liberty Award by former USCIRF Commissioner Richard D. Land, president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. Other members of the Commission are Khaled Abou El Fadl, Preeta D. Bansal, Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, Elizabeth H. Prodromou, Bishop Ricardo Ramirez, Michael K. Young, and Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom at the State Department, John V. Hanford III, ex-officio.

Michael Cromartie, Chair

- Felice D. Gaer, Vice Chair Nina Shea, Vice Chair Preeta D. Bansal Archbishop Charles J. Chaput Khaled Abou El Fadl Elizabeth H. Prodromou Bishop Ricardo Ramirez Michael K. Young Ambassador John V. Hanford III, Ex-Officio Joseph R. Crapa, Executive Director