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WASHINGTON, DC – – The U.S. Congress has appointed the Honorable Sam Gejdenson to serve as a Commissioner on the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) recommended Mr. Gejdenson.

“USCIRF welcomes Representative Gejdenson as our newest incoming Commissioner,” said [Leonard Leo](#), USCIRF chair. “He will make significant contributions to our work on behalf of the cherished right of freedom of religion or belief and its fuller integration into U.S. foreign policy and national security.”

Sam Gejdenson served as a Member of Congress from 1981 until 2000 as the U.S. Representative from the Second Congressional District in Connecticut. During his tenure in Congress, he rose to be the senior Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee. While on the Committee, he was widely recognized for his expertise in, among other areas, human rights, democracy and global engagement. His leadership on curbing international trafficking of women and children is reflected in his co-authorship of the groundbreaking Trafficking Victims Protection Act (which was reauthorized in 2008). Since leaving office, Mr. Gejdenson has, among other activities, worked to help build democracy in Eastern Europe and nations of the former Soviet Union. He has served on numerous boards including American Jewish World Service (AJWS) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI), monitored elections in Bangladesh, Belarus, Georgia, Peru and Ukraine, and advised NDI’s country offices worldwide on promoting democracy and good government.

Gejdenson, the first child of Holocaust survivors elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, was born in 1948 in a U.S. displaced persons camp in Eschwege, Germany. He received an A.S. degree from Mitchell College in New London, Connecticut in 1968 and a B.A. from the University of Connecticut in Storrs, Connecticut in 1970. In 1974, he was elected to the Connecticut House of Representatives, serving two terms before accepting a post in the administration of Connecticut Governor Ella T. Grasso.

Comprised of nine commissioners, USCIRF is an independent, bipartisan federal body that is principally responsible for reviewing the facts and circumstances of violations of religious freedom internationally and making policy recommendations to the President, Secretary of State, and Congress.

USCIRF offers policy solutions to improve conditions at the critical juncture of foreign policy, national security, and international religious freedom standards. The President and leadership of both political parties in the Senate and House of Representatives appoint USCIRF Commissioners.

To interview a USCIRF Commissioner, contact Paul Liben at Pliben@uscirf.gov or (703) 870-6041.