

Rep. Alcee L. Hastings, *Florida*
Chairman

Rep. Louise McIntosh Slaughter, *New York*
Rep. Mike McIntyre, *North Carolina*
Rep. Hilda L. Solis, *California*
Rep. G. K. Butterfield, *North Carolina*
Rep. Christopher H. Smith, *New Jersey*
Rep. Joseph R. Pitts, *Pennsylvania*
Rep. Robert B. Aderholt, *Alabama*
Rep. Mike Pence, *Indiana*

Fred L. Turner, Chief of Staff



Sen. Benjamin L. Cardin, *Maryland*
Co-Chairman

Sen. Russell D. Feingold, *Wisconsin*
Sen. Christopher J. Dodd, *Connecticut*
Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, *New York*
Sen. John F. Kerry, *Massachusetts*
Sen. Sam Brownback, *Kansas*
Sen. Gordon H. Smith, *Oregon*
Sen. Saxby Chambliss, *Georgia*
Sen. Richard Burr, *North Carolina*

Hon. David J. Kramer, *Department of State*
Hon. David Bohigian, *Department of Commerce*
Hon. Mary Beth Long, *Department of Defense*

January 7, 2009

His Excellency Kurmanbek Bakiev
President
Republic of Kyrgyzstan
Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

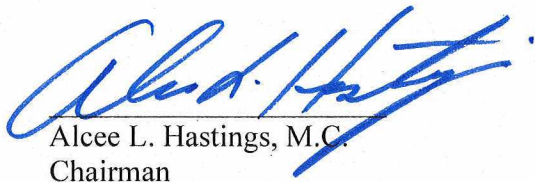
Dear Mr. President:

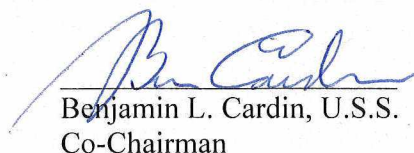
We are writing to express our concern about the draft law on religion passed by Kyrgyzstan's parliament on November 6, 2008. This legislation needs only your signature to become binding in Kyrgyzstan. We strongly urge you not to sign this law, which would mark serious regression in your country's observance of OSCE norms.

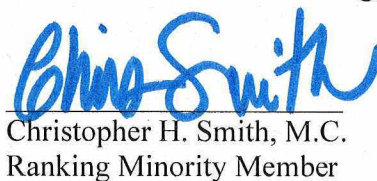
Representatives of minority faiths and many leading international human rights organizations have analyzed the draft and have concluded it is seriously flawed. As you must know, the OSCE's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), has done an exhaustive review of the draft law. There are many problems with the legislation but in essence, as currently drafted it would severely restrict freedom of religion, in terms of, *inter alia*: registration, with a minimum requirement of 200 adult members; the ban on unregistered communities; restrictions on the education of children; the threat of liquidation of religious communities; and restrictions on missionary activity.

In Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan has in many respects been at the forefront of democratic development. We strongly believe that passage of this draft law in its current state without revision would result in Kyrgyzstan no longer being in compliance with OSCE norms and damage your country's reputation. The United States Government has called on you to return the legislation to parliament for revision, to ensure that Kyrgyzstan upholds its OSCE commitments on religious freedom, as well as Kyrgyzstan's own Constitution. We fully agree and hope that you will take serious account of the concern evoked by this law in many other capitals.

Sincerely,


Alcee L. Hastings, M.C.
Chairman


Benjamin L. Cardin, U.S.S.
Co-Chairman


Christopher H. Smith, M.C.
Ranking Minority Member