

November 7, 2014

Majority Leader Harry Reid
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Chairman Chris Coons
Subcommittee on African Affairs
U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Ranking Member Jeff Flake
Subcommittee on African Affairs
U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Reid, Coons, and Flake,

The undersigned secularist, humanist, nontheist, atheist, and religious freedom advocacy organizations write in support of the nomination of Rabbi David Saperstein to the position of Ambassador-at Large for International Religious Freedom within the United States Department of State. We urge the Senate and relevant committee to expediently confirm Rabbi Saperstein so that he can begin his important work, which is at this moment extraordinarily relevant as armed conflicts in the Middle East and elsewhere around the world threaten countless communities of nonbelievers and religious minorities seeking to exercise their basic human rights to freedom of religion or belief.

We believe that Rabbi Saperstein is uniquely suited for this position for several reasons. His forty years at the Religious Action Center, spent advocating for religious freedom for all Americans, provides him intimate knowledge of both the federal political process and the concerns of a wide range of religious and secular civil society groups. Furthermore, as the first non-Christian to have been nominated for this post since it was created by Congress in 1998, Rabbi Saperstein has exceptional insight into the difficulties faced by religious minorities who require U.S. assistance.

Rabbi Saperstein has also shown that he is sympathetic to the concerns of those who are atheistic or nontheistic, a community that is subject to frequent discrimination internationally due to laws and norms prohibiting discussion of religion or de-conversion from religion/s. In his testimony on September 11, 2014, before the Subcommittee on African Affairs, Rabbi Saperstein confirmed his desire to protect the rights of both theists *and* nontheists, stating, “To the religiously oppressed in every land who live in fear, afraid to speak of what they believe in...simply because they love God in their own way or question the existence of God; who feel so desperate that they flee their homes to avoid killing and persecution...to all of them, together, you and I, the State Department and the Congress, can be a beacon of light and hope.”

We fully support the nomination of Rabbi Saperstein and urge the Senate to expediently confirm Rabbi Saperstein as the new Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom.

Sincerely,

American Atheists
American Humanist Association
American Secular Census
Atheist Alliance of America
Atheist Nexus
Camp Quest
Center for Inquiry
Council for Secular Humanism
Institute for Science and Human Values
Recovering from Religion
Secular Coalition for America
Secular Student Alliance
Society for Humanist Judaism
The Freethought Society
Unitarian Universalist Humanists