News



Tony Perkins, President of the Family Research Council, speaks during the final day of the Republican National Convention in Cleveland, Ohio, on July 21, 2016. (AP/J. Scott Applewhite)

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Tony Perkins, the head of the conservative Christian lobbying group Family Research Council, has been appointed to a U.S. government commission dedicated to "defending the universal right to freedom of religion or belief abroad."

On May 14, the Congressional Record revealed that Perkins had been appointed to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom on the recommendation of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky. The USCIRF is an independent, bipartisan U.S. federal government commission created in 1998 through the passage of the International Religious Freedom Act, and issues an annual report every May 1 on international religious freedom issues.

"I am grateful to Majority Leader McConnell for appointing me to this prestigious position. From my post at USCIRF, I look forward to doing all that I can to ensure that our government is the single biggest defender of religious freedom internationally," Perkins, an evangelical Christian and frequent faith adviser to President Trump's administration, said in a press release.

Perkins expressed particular interest in addressing religious freedom issues in nations that top the commission's list of "Countries of Particular Concern," saying in his statement, "It is my hope that through the work of USCIRF, the world will become one step closer to recognizing the vital role religious freedom and the defense of religious minorities play in peace, security and human flourishing."

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Perkins intends to remain president of the Family Research Council during his two-year term on the USCIRF.

FRC has been labeled as an anti-LGBT hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center, although Perkins and the FRC dispute the label.

Perkins has been a consistent supporter of Trump, telling Politico in January that he and other evangelical Christians gave the president a "mulligan" for past behavior that may have been at odds with conservative Christian values. Perkins is also creditedas being one of the driving forces behind Trump's various efforts to ban transgender people from the U.S. military.