



# ECUMENICAL ADVOCACY DAYS

FOR GLOBAL PEACE WITH JUSTICE

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## Troubling the Waters for the Healing of the World

**Congressional Advocacy Day  
Monday, April 8, 2019**

**As Christians from a broad range of faith traditions, we urge Congress to strengthen the voices of all Americans in our democracy, and the voices of human rights defenders around the world by working to eliminate violent conflict and all threats to civic engagement and human dignity.**

*Every person has the God-given right to self-determination and full participation in the political community. To protect civil and human rights for all Americans, our nation must eliminate barriers to meaningful political engagement. Implementing vital democratic reforms that are necessary to a fully functioning and healthy democracy will help ensure justice for all and advance the common good. Furthermore, Congress should act to reduce and end violent conflict and strengthen respect for human rights and protection of human rights defenders abroad.*

***I. We call on Congress to protect civil rights for all and uphold essential democratic principles by eliminating all barriers to voter participation, implementing fair and just election oversight, and supporting the voting rights of returning citizens. This includes the following crucial reforms:***

- Strengthen and modernize voter registration by expanding automatic voter registration and online registration.
- Ensure polling places are easily accessible to everyone, including persons with physical limitations, chronic illness or disability.
- Make Election Day a National Holiday.
- Enact early and extended voting nationwide to ensure all voters have the opportunity to participate in the election process.
- Reform our current campaign finance structure to end the dominance and influence of corporate money in our politics.
- Restore the protections of Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act (VRA).
- Implement fair redistricting and end partisan gerrymandering.
- Create a national strategy to improve election vendor oversight to support security of voting systems.
- Restore the voting rights of returning citizens to engage in the election process.

***II. We call on Congress to act to reduce and end violent conflict and strengthen respect for human rights and protection of human rights defenders abroad by supporting both the Global Fragility Act and S. Res. 80 creating a Senate Human Rights Commission.***

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(571) 882-9730 | [AdvocacyDays.org](http://AdvocacyDays.org)**

**The Global Fragility Act** sponsored by Senators Lindsey Graham (R-SC) and Chris Coons (D-DE) S.727 and Representatives Michael McCaul (R-TX) and Eliot Engel (D-NY) H.R.1580 requires the U.S. government in collaboration with global civil society to develop a 10-year strategy to bring down current levels of global violence which undermines rights and human dignity abroad.

According to the World Bank, violence and violent conflict are now the leading causes of displacement worldwide, driving 80% of humanitarian needs. United States foreign policy and assistance efforts in highly violent and fragile states too often prioritize responding to immediate needs rather than solving the problems that cause them, or tend to escalate the violence in the area.

*The Global Fragility Act (GFA)* would advance the values of human dignity and just peace, while helping us do a better job of addressing the root causes of violent conflict. The GFA would launch the first-ever whole-of-government strategy to address the risks of fragility by stabilizing conflict-affected areas and preventing violent conflict globally; it would

- Identify where fragility poses the greatest threats to civilian security and select those countries or regions where the U.S. government will pilot innovative diplomatic and programmatic action;
- Improve the U.S. government's ability to measure, evaluate, and assess efforts to prevent violence and fragility; as well as authorize existing funds.

**S. Res. 80**, sponsored by Senators Chris Coons (D-DE) and Thom Tillis (R-NC), would establish a Human Rights Commission in the Senate. This allows Congress to create a forum in the Senate matching the similar Tom Lantos Commission in the House to make human rights issues and the protection of human rights defenders around the globe a more central part of our national debate and policymaking.

A Senate Human Rights Commission is urgently needed given the tremendous dangers faced by human rights defenders worldwide. Around the globe governments are enacting restrictions on freedom of expression, assembly, press, and association; enacting or enforcing laws restricting the funding and registration of civil society organizations; using anti-terrorism and other laws to restrict the rights of defenders and journalists; using deadly force to repress peaceful protesters; and failing to protect defenders and to investigate and prosecute the crimes against them. Thousands of human rights defenders face threats, physical attacks, sexual violence, arbitrary detention, torture, forced disappearances, and assassinations. At least 321 defenders were killed in 2018 within just 27 countries.

Like the existing Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission on the House side, a Senate Human Rights Commission could become a vital bipartisan forum in which members of Congress can hear from human rights activists and human rights experts and call for action from governments around the globe to protect human rights and end human rights abuses.

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