

2013 SESSION

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SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 17

Offered February 27, 2012

Memorializing the Secretary of State of the United States of America to support those suffering religious persecution and discrimination in countries that do not recognize religious freedom.

Patron—Petersen

Unanimous consent to introduce

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, Virginia is the home of the Statute for Religious Freedom (§ 57 - 1, Code of Virginia); and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom was the model for the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States and the expressions of religious freedom in countries throughout the world; and

WHEREAS, citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia have escaped religious discrimination and persecution around the globe and have found sanctuary in the United States; and

WHEREAS, many of those citizens still have family and friends who face discrimination and persecution each and every day based solely on their religious identity; and

WHEREAS, many Virginians of Pakistani descent watch as their families and friends daily risk their lives because of their religious belief; and

WHEREAS, in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, laws are in place to discriminate against and restrict the expressions of religious groups other than the majority, such as the minority Christian and Ahmadi Muslim communities; and

WHEREAS, the Pakistani government has discriminated against their communities, and has deemed their communities "blasphemous"; and

WHEREAS, election laws divide the electorate into Muslim and non-Muslim voters and prohibit members of each group from voting for candidates outside their respective religious parties; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Senate of Virginia affirm its support for those suffering religious persecution and discrimination in countries that do not recognize religious freedom; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Senate of Virginia affirm the right of all citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia to practice their faith openly and without discrimination; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That laws that arbitrarily and discriminatorily restrict the fundamental right of religious freedom be repealed; and, be it

RESOLVED FINALLY, That the Clerk of the Senate transmit a copy of this resolution to the Secretary of State of the United States of America and the Governor of Virginia so that they may be apprised of the sense of the Senate of Virginia in this matter.

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