



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Tibetan American Tenzin Dorjee Unanimously Elected as Chair of US Commission on International Religious Freedom Commission

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The International Campaign for Tibet congratulates Dr. Tenzin Dorjee whose unanimous election as Chair of Bipartisan U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) was announced on June 12, 2018. USCIRF is a federal government commission established by the 1998 International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) that monitors the universal right to freedom of religion or belief abroad.

In a statement, USCIRF said, “In a show of bipartisan collegiality and support for the new Chair, the Commissioners opted to hold the election openly, rather than following the Commission’s usual procedure of voting anonymously by closed ballot.”

Commissioners are appointed for two-year terms, and are eligible for reappointment. In December 2016, Dr. Tenzin Dorjee was first appointed as a Commissioner of USCIRF, having been nominated by Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi. In May this year, the House of Representatives announced his appointment for another term at the Commission.

The International Religious Freedom Act mandates that three Commissioners are selected by the President, two by the Leaders of the President’s party in Congress, and four by the Congressional Leaders of the party not in the White House.

In reaction to his election, Dr. Dorjee said, “It is an honor and privilege to be unanimously elected Chair of the Commission. Our Commissioners bring a diverse array of complementary experiences and skills to the table, and we all share a collective commitment to the promotion of religious freedom or belief for those of all faiths and none.”

He added, “The challenges to religious freedom around the globe are growing on a daily basis, but so too is our resolve to confront these challenges. As the first Tibetan Buddhist elected Chair, I look forward to leading this Commission over the next year in an inclusive way as we provide policy recommendations to the White House, the Secretary of State, and Congress on addressing the global challenges to freedom of religion or belief.”

Dr. Tenzin Dorjee is the first Tibetan American and Buddhist to be appointed a Commissioner and also to be elected to serve as chair of USCIRF.

Matteo Mecacci, President of the International Campaign for Tibet, said, “Since his appointment as a Commissioner, we have seen Dr. Tenzin Dorjee playing a very positive and active role in the essential activities carried out by the Commission to promote religious freedom abroad. We have been privileged to work together with Chairman Dorjee and USCIRF on some events on Capitol Hill and found his contribution very meaningful. His election as Chair is also an indication of the increasing role that the small Tibetan American community is playing in the American political system.”

USCIRF also unanimously elected Kristina Arriaga and Gayle Manchin as its two Vice Chairs. Other members of USCIRF are Gary L. Bauer, Nadine Maenza, Johnnie Moore, and Tony Perkins. Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom Sam Brownback serves ex officio on the Commission. [Read the full Commissioner bios here.](#)

USCIRF makes policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State, and Congress.

Following is Dr. Dorjee’s bio;
Dr. Tenzin Dorjee
California State University at Fullerton

Tenzin Dorjee (Ph.D., University of California, Santa Barbara) is Associate Professor at the Department of Human Communication Studies, California State University at Fullerton (CSUF). He is an intergroup and intercultural communication expert whose primary teaching and research interests are in intergroup, intercultural, intergenerational communication, identity issues, peace building, and conflict resolution. He has authored and co-authored peer-reviewed articles and chapters on Tibetan culture, identity, and communication, nonviolence and middle way approaches to Sino-Tibetan conflict, intergenerational communication context, and others.

California State University at Fullerton honored him with several outstanding recognitions for his superior teaching, peer-reviewed journal publications of the Highest Quality Scholarly and Creative Activity, and extraordinary community service: Faculty Recognition: Teacher-Scholar Award in 2011, Faculty Recognition: Scholarly and Creative Activity in 2013 and 2016, and Faculty Recognition: Extraordinary and Sustained Service in 2015. The Western States of Communication Association (WSCA) elected him to the WSCA Executive Council and Chair of the Committee for Teaching Excellence Award in 2013.

Dr. Dorjee is a published author and translator of Tibetan Buddhism into English and had also served as translator to His Holiness the Dalai Lama during teachings and talks in India and USA. He is also a prominent native translator (Lotsawa) of over 30 years with many articles.

He was initially appointed to the Commission on December 8, 2016, by House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and reappointed on May 10, 2018.

For more information, see Dr. Tenzin Dorjee, Commissioner at [USCIRF website.](#)