

November 19, 2003- Sanchez Vietnam Religious Freedom Bill Passes

November 19, 2003 House Passes Sanchez Legislation

Calling for Religious Freedom in Vietnam

Washington, D.C. – Today, Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez (D-CA) was joined by 409 Members of the U.S. House of Representatives to pass H. Res. 427, a bill calling on Vietnam to cease its assault on human and religious freedom.

“Despite growing bilateral and economic relations between the United States and Vietnam, the Vietnamese Government has continued its blatant disregard of religious freedom—a basic human right guaranteed by the Vietnamese Constitution and enshrined in the United Nations Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which Vietnam has both ratified and pledged to uphold, ” said Congresswoman Sanchez on the floor of the House today.

In early October, the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam held two peaceful assemblies in the Binh Dinh Province of Vietnam to discuss church affairs and elect new leadership following promises of a new era of “respect and understanding for religious freedom” by Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Van Khai. In stark contrast to this promise of “respect and understanding”, Vietnamese Security Police intercepted the new UBCV leadership as they left Binh Dinh province. After a tense 10-hour standoff, 11 monks were arrested and placed under administrative detention. UBCV Patriarch Thich Huyen Quang, 86, and his Deputy, Nobel Peace Prize nominee, Thich Quang Do, 75, are currently being held in total isolation.

Sanchez called on her colleagues to join her in support of the resolution. “Doing so will not only send a strong message to the Vietnamese government that its actions are not going unnoticed, but it will reinforce the human rights standards we expect of Vietnam as we move forward in strengthening our bilateral relationship.”

Representatives of the Vietnamese government recently visiting Washington expressed opposition to the legislation to various members of the Bush Administration. Additions bill sponsors included: Rep Hyde, Henry J. [R-IL], Rep Lantos, Tom [D-CA], Rep Smith, Christopher H. [R-NJ], Rep Davis, Tom [R-VA], Rep Lofgren, Zoe [D-CA], Rep Bell, Chris [D-TX], Rep Berman, Howard L. [D-CA], Rep Crowley, Joseph [D-NY], Rep Culberson, John Abney [R-TX], Rep Davis, Jo Ann [R-VA], Rep Delahunt, William D. [D-MA], Rep. Green, Gene [D-TX], Rep Hoeffel, Joseph M. [D-PA], Rep McNulty, Michael R. [D-NY], Rep Napolitano, Grace F. [D-CA], Rep Rohrabacher, Dana [R-CA], Rep Ros-Lehtinen, Ileana [R-FL], Rep Royce, Edward R. [R-CA], Rep Schiff, Adam B. [D-CA], Rep Solis, Hilda L. [D-CA], Rep Watson, Diane E. [D-CA], Rep Wexler, Robert [D-FL], Sam Farr [D-CA]