

September 15, 2004- State Department Applauded on Naming Vietnam a CPC

CONGRESSWOMAN SANCHEZ APPLAUDS STATE DEPARTMENT DECISION TO NAME VIETNAM A COUNTRY OF PARTICULAR CONCERN (CPC)

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, the U.S. State Department released its Sixth Annual Report on International Religious Freedom, adding Vietnam to a growing list of countries known as CPC's, or governments that engage in or tolerate gross infringements of religious freedom.

In addition to the five countries currently listed by the State Department as CPC's - Burma, Sudan, North Korea, Iran, and China- the State Department added Saudi Arabia, Eritrea, and Vietnam. I have been urging the State Department to designate Vietnam as a CPC for quite some time now and am pleased that they have taken this important step, said Rep. Sanchez.

Vietnam's human rights record speaks for itself--We have a refugee crisis emerging with the Montagnards in the Central Highlands, Father Nguyen Van Ly remains imprisoned, Pastor Nguyen Hong Quang, and the Venerables Thich Huyen Quang and Thich Quang Do remain under house arrest, and these are only a few of the most notable cases. In addition, independent religious groups, such as the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam, are not allowed to practice their faith. The CPC designation will give the United States the leveraging tool it needs to get real results from Vietnam.

A CPC designation requires the Secretary of State to engage with a country and outline a plan for improving its human rights record. If the country fails to make significant improvements, the United States can utilize a broader range of policy tools, including sanctions.