



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Council for America's First Freedom's President, Ambassador Robert A. Seiple, to Retire**

**RICHMOND, Va. (May 13, 2008)** - The Council for America's First Freedom today announced that Ambassador Robert A. Seiple, President, has informed the Board of his plans to retire, effective October 1, 2008.

"I wish to thank Bob for his leadership and many contributions during his tenure, including completing the move of the Council's offices to 14<sup>th</sup> and Main Streets, opening the Council's first exhibit, "Faces of Religious Freedom," instituting the Council's several new educational programs, but most importantly, positioning the Council and its mission at a higher level in terms of value, esteem and recognition throughout the country," said Tommy P. Baer, chair of the Council's board. "We are so fortunate to have had Bob leading our efforts for these years before his retirement."

An ambassador, global leader and educator, Robert Seiple was the first ever U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, charged with promoting religious freedom worldwide, promoting reconciliation in areas of religious conflict and assuring that this issue was woven into the fabric of the U.S. foreign policy. After his work as an ambassador he created the Institute for Global Engagement (IGE), a "think tank with legs," to develop sustainable environments for religious freedom worldwide, and to inspire and equip emerging leaders with faith-based methodologies of engagement. Seiple spent the previous 11 years as president of World Vision, Inc., the largest privately funded relief and development agency in the world. At his

leaving, World Vision was administering help to more than 70 million beneficiaries in more than 100 countries of the world.

“The importance of religion, and more specifically, religious freedom, has been vividly demonstrated all over the world. The educational role of the Council has never been more necessary than today,” said Seiple. “Passion for this issue continues to grow, supported by a committed staff, board, and a wide range of friends, from Richmond and beyond. I am retiring with a wonderful set of memories.”

“It has been a pleasure and an honor to work with Bob on the Council’s board,” said Marilyn H. West, a board member. “The progress that has been made in the short time that he’s been here is staggering. Bob lives the mission of the Council and his passion is evident whether he’s speaking to an audience of hundreds or one on one. Many more people and organizations now know of the Council’s work due to Bob’s amplification of the issues. We will certainly miss him, but wish him well in this new stage of his life.”

“Bob has laid the foundation for the Council to be an exemplary model for people who understand or want to understand the importance of religious freedom in this country, and who wish to improve relations with people of all religious faiths,” said Jim Ukrop, one of the Council’s staunch supporters. “Bob helped people realize the value of this organization to Richmond’s history and the importance of its mission in today’s world.”

The Council is conducting a search for a successor who will help lead the organization through its next stages of growth.

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#### **About the Council for America’s First Freedom**

The mission of the Council for America's First Freedom is to increase understanding and respect for religious freedom in diverse communities worldwide through education about this core human value: *the freedom of thought, conscience and belief*.

The Council also sponsors the Presidential Proclamation of National Religious Freedom Day (January 16), First Freedom Awards, National First Freedom Student Competition, The Constitution and Religion in the Classroom educational program, and the Teacher Training Institute, Footprints of Religious Freedom. For more information, please visit [www.firstfreedom.org](http://www.firstfreedom.org).