

## Religious Liberties and Political Challenges

Western democracies have long celebrated free speech and free religious expression. In fact, many Network participants have only known such freedoms and have come to consider them “normal.” Yet history tells a different story. Religious freedom is not the historical norm, and our predecessors in the first century church worshipped in a hostile environment. Our heritage as believers predates the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other governmental edicts. What does it mean to clearly understand that our hope resides not in pronouncements by governments, but on Him who spoke the world into existence?

**Peter Roskam** served for twenty-five years in elected office in the United States, including six terms in the US House of Representatives where he served in the Congressional Leadership. He chaired three Congressional subcommittees and was involved with a wide range of legislative action on tax policy, healthcare, IRS reform, the Iran nuclear deal, and the Benghazi investigation. He chaired the bipartisan US House Democracy Partnership, sits on the board of the National Endowment for Democracy, and was a Visiting Fellow at the University of Chicago. He and his wife Elizabeth, an accomplished oil painter, have been married for 30 years and have four adult children.

*[Caveat: Some among us have experienced persecution for their faith. Most have not.]*

### I. Our Expectations

Today we expect — freedom to assemble  
freedom to worship  
freedom to travel  
freedom to associate  
freedom to publish  
freedom to speak  
freedom to broadcast  
freedom to subsidize  
freedom to educate  
freedom to earn  
freedom to tweet  
freedom to evangelize  
freedom to litigate  
freedom to criticize  
freedom from taxation — among other things.

Sirens and emergency personnel

## II. Our Heritage

*“I was, and indeed am, impressed by the fact that the **New Testament letters were written not in some holy retreat but sometimes from prison, sometimes from ordinary, probably Christian homes. Moreover, they were written to people who were called to live Christian lives in a thoroughly pagan world.** Moral standards of all kinds were low, and there was nothing remotely resembling a Christian public opinion. There were no Sundays, no church buildings, and very little leisure for most people. Slavery was, of course, everywhere and so was dire poverty and unrelieved sickness and disease. The great persecutions had not yet started, but smaller ones had. **A man could lose not only his friends but his livelihood** in a place like Ephesus if it became known publicly that he did not believe in the goddess Diana. A man could easily be looked at askance if he disowned the local gods, and he could be considered very odd if he broke with his previous companions in alcoholic revelings. And it could have been **very easy to frame a charge** against a man who set Jesus Christ above the Emperor of the Roman Empire.”*

*The Ring of Truth by J.B. Phillips, p. 43*

### **III. Our Plan**

“Be strong — not in yourselves but in the Lord, in the power of his boundless resource. Put on God’s complete armor so that you can resist all the devil’s methods of attack. For our fight is not against any physical enemy: it is against organizations and powers that are spiritual. We are up against the unseen power that controls this dark world and spiritual agents from the very headquarters of evil.” Ephesians 6:10-13

Belt of Truth

Breastplate of Righteousness

Gospel of Peace on your feet

Helmet of Salvation

Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God

Shield of Faith

Prayer at all times