

# SAM BROWNBACK

**IMPACT:** The current U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, Sam Brownback is the former Governor of Kansas who signed anti-sharia legislation into state law and withdrew Kansas from the federal refugee resettlement program for purported reasons of national security. As a Governor, Brownback also advocated religious freedom at the expense of anti-discrimination laws that protected LGBT Kansans.

- Sam Brownback is the **current United States Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom**. He was confirmed by the U.S. Senate in January 2018 after Vice President Mike Pence cast a tie-breaking vote. Brownback **previously served as the 46th Governor of Kansas** during 2011-2018, as a U.S. Senator during 1996-2011 and as the U.S. Representative for Kansas from 1995 to 1996.
- **The mission of the Office of International Religious Freedom is to “promot[e] religious freedom as a core objective of U.S. foreign policy.”** Housed in the U.S. State Department, the Office of International Religious Freedom aims to “monitor religious persecution and discrimination worldwide, recommend and implement policies in respective regions or countries, and develop programs to promote religious freedom.” Ambassador Brownback reports directly to the U.S. Secretary of State.
- In January 2018, **Frank Gaffney praised the confirmation of Brownback for Ambassador-at-Large for Religious Freedom**. He wrote on his Center for Security Policy website: “Sam Brownback deserves the support of every American as he works to halt the persecution of Christians and others subjected because of their religion to rape, torture, enslavement and genocide” (emphasis in original). According to the Center for American Progress (CAP) Fear Inc. reports, Gaffney is one of the leading “misinformation experts” of the “Islamophobia network.”
- In July 2017, **Zuhdi Jasser, President of the American Islamic Forum for Democracy and former vice-chair for the U.S. Commission for International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), spoke out in support of Brownback’s nomination**. Jasser, who is described by the Center for American Progress’ Fear Inc. reports as a “validator” of Islamophobia, stated: “Brownback understands how nations which protect religious freedom first will advance human rights and democracy, and those who do not will see their nations deteriorate on all levels of security and human rights.” USCIRF is the “independent, bipartisan U.S. federal government commission...dedicated to defending the universal right to freedom of religion or belief abroad” and which works closely with the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom,
- In September 2015, then-Governor Brownback, then-U.S. Rep. Mike Pompeo (R-KS) and U.S. Senator Pat Roberts (R-KS) co-authored an op-ed in *The Wichita Eagle* titled, “Detainees shouldn’t be in anyone’s backyard.” The authors **argued against the transfer of Guantanamo Bay detainees to U.S. soil and characterized the detention facility as “the right place” for “hardened terrorists.”**
- In May 2012, **then-Governor Brownback signed into law Kansas Senate Bill 79**. According to reporting in Reuters in May 2012, the bill aimed to keep “state courts and agencies from using Islamic or other non-U.S. laws when making decisions.”
- **The bill received strong support from Pamela Geller and Robert Spencer**, who encouraged their followers to “flood [Brownback’s] Twitter” and “jam his phones” in support for the bill. In an email circulated in May 2012 by ACT for America, the largest anti-Muslim grassroots organization in the country, **ACT took credit for the passing of the bill, claiming** it “spearheaded a grassroots effort that produced more than 30,000 phone calls and emails to Kansas legislators.”

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- Kansas Senate Bill 79 is one of many **bills that have banned “foreign laws,” a euphemism that bars courts from considering Islamic jurisprudence, or sharia.** In its “Legalizing Othering: The United States of Islamophobia” report, the Haas Institute at the University of California Berkeley labels such phenomena as the **“anti-Sharia movement.”** which it describes as a concerted effort by **“anti-Muslim activists such as David Yerushalmi, Brigitte Gabriel, Frank Gaffney,** among others, to embed a fear of ‘Sharia law’ within American society, and to influence lawmakers to introduce anti-Sharia bills that target Muslims.”
- In April 2016, under Brownback’s leadership as the then-Governor, **Kansas became the first state in the U.S. to withdraw from the federal refugee resettlement program.** Prior to this policy decision, in November 2015, following deadly bombings and shootings at the Bataclan theater in Paris, Brownback stated: “America has always provided a refuge for the oppressed and those who seek freedom. However, **we must be sure that we are not admitting terrorists.**”
- In March 2016, Brownback signed into law Kansas Senate Bill 175, which reporting in *The Wichita Eagle* stated **would permit discrimination to occur on publicly funded college campuses** by “enabl[ing] campus religious groups to restrict their membership to students that adhere to a religion’s tenets.” According to reporting in *The Topeka Capital-Journal*, advocates for the bill included GOP lawmakers who claimed that existing laws meant that **“gays, Muslims or other outsiders could force their way into Christian organizations in ways that compromised religious liberty of core members.”**
- In February 2015, **then-Governor Brownback rescinded a state executive order that prohibited “discrimination against most state employees on the basis of sexual orientation.”** In July 2016, then-Governor Brownback issued an executive order that prohibited the Kansan government from “taking action against clergy members or religious organizations that deny services,” including those related to marriage, charity, housing, adoption and foster care, “to couples based on religious beliefs.” According to Brownback, the executive order protects “Kansas clergy and religious organizations from being forced to participate in activities that violate their sincerely and deeply held beliefs.”
- In response to Brownback’s nomination, the executive director of the ACLU of Kansas stated that, for Brownback, **“‘religious freedom’ has meant issuing a license to discriminate against others, especially against LGBT Kansans.”**