

197 JUN 25 412-54
THE WHITE HOUSE

MR. PRESIDENT
Sammy Berger -

Bob called me and
I discussed this issue with
Sammy and Sandy agreed
to follow up with the
Senator immediately.

Senator Bennett's a
good guy and the President
may want to call him
since we agree on this
issue

EBR

6128197

NSC please
coordinate the
reply. Original
has been forwarded
to POTUS.

Staff Sec.

Chron

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4403

(202) 224-5444

June 24, 1997

'97 JUN 26 PM 12:34

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

All Americans rejoiced as we watched the Russian people gain freedoms that had been denied them while under the bondage of communism; we support their aspirations for the personal liberties we have enjoyed for two hundred years. This is why we are deeply concerned by the threat posed to those liberties by a discriminatory bill on religious association now wending its way through the Duma. If this bill were to become law, the Russian people would be denied the fundamental right of religious freedom. Only those religious associations in existence during the height of the Cold War, when atheism was the official philosophy of the Soviet State, would be allowed to operate freely.

We thank you for raising this issue with President Yeltsin on Friday and we join in your opposition to the Duma's religious discrimination measure. History shows that religious repression always precedes political repression. If the current measure is not turned back, it is likely that other basic human rights and democracy will soon be under attack. We remember President Yeltsin's heroic defense of democracy and human rights six years ago and we expect that he will veto any legislation restricting those freedoms.

As members of the Appropriations Committee that provides the money for Russian assistance, we want you to know that we appreciate, stand with and support your personal efforts to communicate the high level of concern that all Americans have on this issue.

Sincerely,

Red Stevens
Robert J. Bennett
John Chafee
Samuel Alito
Laurel Ambrose
Ann Hutchinson

Al M. Council

Paul Coleman

Patricia Leahy

Barbara A. Mahan

Byron L. Long

Robert B. Reed

Harry K. K.

Wade Foster

Patricia A. Green

W. M. M.

Patty Murray

Richard Shelby

Conrad R.
