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ACLU of Kansas Statement on Brownback Confirmation

OVERLAND PARK, KS --- In response to Governor Brownback's confirmation as Ambassador for International Religious Freedom, ACLU of Kansas executive director Micah Kubic made the following statement:

“Governor Brownback's confirmation as Ambassador for International Religious Freedom marks a dark day for the core American value of equality under the law. Given Gov. Brownback's record of steadfast opposition to equal rights for LGBT Americans—and his wrong-headed insistence that discrimination is justified by religious belief—the confirmation, made after a tie-breaking vote by Vice President Pence, should be considered a clear indication of the Trump Administration's approach to equality.

The ACLU takes no position—either in support or opposition—on the confirmation of presidential nominations of any kind, including this one. However, we feel compelled to note that throughout his tumultuous tenure, Gov. Brownback worked tirelessly to erode the protections that the First Amendment affords for the separation of church and state. More troubling, Gov. Brownback has been one of the nation's leading proponents of the notion that people, businesses, and even governments should be able to discriminate against others because of their own religious beliefs. The governor went so far as to advocate for, and sign into law, a bill that mandates government funding of organizations that discriminate in their membership, so long as that discrimination is rooted in religious belief. The governor made his true beliefs clear during his hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee last fall, when he refused to unequivocally condemn the practice of criminalizing, imprisoning, or even executing someone for their LGBT status.

In Gov. Brownback's view, "religious freedom" has meant issuing a license to discriminate against others, especially against LGBT Kansans. His policies on religious freedom have not been about protecting the constitutional right to worship when, where, how, and with whom you like; they have been about giving people the ability to pick and choose whether they will respect the fundamental human rights of their fellow citizens, based on their own particular religious views.

Kansans deserve far better than the endless attacks on civil liberties that Gov. Brownback has launched over his past seven years in office. We urge Lt. Gov. Colyer to seize this opportunity to turn our state in a more promising direction and look forward to working with him to build a healthier and stronger democracy that works for all Kansans."