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## **Sisisky Family Donates \$250,000 to First Freedom Center**

*Glass window relief to bear former congressman's name*

**RICHMOND, Va. (January 11, 2006)** – In honor of his lifelong efforts to advance the ideals of religious liberty, the family of the late U.S. Congressman Norman Sisisky (D-Va.), has given a gift of \$250,000 to the Council for America's First Freedom, the nonprofit organization raising funds to build a national educational center about freedom of religion in Richmond, Va.

“On behalf of my mother Rhoda, my family is pleased to make this gift to support a cause that was an abiding part of my father's political life,” said Mark Sisisky, the late congressman's son. “I know that he would be proud to be associated with such an important endeavor. As a Virginian, he took special pride in the role our state played in securing many of the liberties we enjoy today.”

The First Freedom Center, to be constructed on the site where the Virginia legislature in 1786 passed the Statute for Religious Freedom, the world's first law guaranteeing religious liberty, will include galleries, exhibits and outreach programs aimed at helping ordinary citizens – especially young people – understand this dynamic issue central to our way of life.

In recognition of the Sisisky's gift, the center will name a sculptural window relief, visible from 14<sup>th</sup> Street in downtown Richmond, in the congressman's honor. The unique work, yet to be commissioned, will depict the document's primary writers – Thomas Jefferson, James Madison and George Mason – as well as the historic coalition that passed the precedent-setting statute. The sculpture will extend two floors, adjacent to the center courtyard and auditorium.

“This is a magnificent gift, not only as an educational centerpiece but as an enduring memorial to Congressman Sisisky's commitment to the tenet of religious liberty,” said Tommy Baer, president of the Council. “We are profoundly grateful to the Sisisky family for their generosity and for helping preserve Congressman Sisisky's legacy in this way.”

Born in Baltimore, Maryland and educated in Richmond, Congressman Sisisky was serving in his 10<sup>th</sup> term in the U.S. House of Representatives when he passed away in March 2001. His son Mark and widow Rhoda are active members of the Jewish community. Mark is executive vice president and managing partner of Caprin Asset Management. He serves as president of the United Way of Greater Richmond and Petersburg Endowment Foundation and is a member of the North American Board of Directors for the Jewish Agency for

Israel. Mr. Sisisky also is the past president of the Jewish Community Federation of Richmond and the Richmond Jewish Foundation.

For more information on the First Freedom center, visit their website at [www.firstfreedom.org](http://www.firstfreedom.org).

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**About the Council:** The Council for America's First Freedom is a 501(c)(3) organization based in Richmond, Virginia that provides educational programs, materials and information about religious freedom as an American historical development, as a contemporary controversy, and as an international human right. The Council sponsors the Presidential Proclamation of National Religious Freedom Day (January); First Freedom Awards; and the national First Freedom Student Competition. For more information, please visit [www.firstfreedom.org](http://www.firstfreedom.org).

**About the First Freedom Center:** The First Freedom Center will be a dynamic and international cultural attraction to inform, educate and inspire people worldwide about religious liberty. The Center, to be built on the historic site of the former State Capitol of Virginia where Thomas Jefferson's Statute for Religious Freedom was adopted in 1786, will be the premier religious freedom education center in the world.

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