[Letterhead with logo and contact information of your organization]

[Today’s date]

The Honorable [Senator’s name]
[Senator’s local office address]

Dear Senator [Senator’s last name]:

We join other constituents of yours from across [your state’s name] to urge you to co-sponsor the Vietnam Human Rights Act, which passed the House overwhelmingly on August 1 and was recently introduced in the Senate as S.1649.

Political crackdown has escalated in Vietnam since 2007. With Burma initiating important reforms, Vietnam now stands out as the worst violator of human rights and worst enemy of democracy in Southeast Asia. According to international human rights organizations, there are some 150 confirmed prisoners of conscience in Vietnamese prisons. They have been falsely accused and convicted on bogus charges because they advocate for human rights, religious freedom and social justice. In the first six months of 2013, close to 50 human rights defenders have been arrested or sentenced. In addition, there are approximately 450 political prisoners from different ethnic minorities.

According to Reporters Without Borders, Vietnam is the world’s second biggest prison for bloggers and cyber-dissidents, only after China. Thirty-five bloggers are currently detained and their rank is swelling steadfastly. Vietnam’s Executive Decree 72, which took effect on September 1, has banned the use of blogs and other social media from sharing information from news sources. On August 26, the Freedom Online Coalition, comprised of 21 governments including the U.S. government, decried that “Decree 72 appears to be inconsistent with Vietnam’s obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as its commitments under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.”

The Vietnamese government continues to suppress freedom of religion by requiring all religious activities be pre-approved by the government. Independent religious groups are forced to submit themselves to state-sponsored religious organizations or be outlawed. Thousands of Protestant house churches, Cao Dai denominations, and Hoa Hao Buddhist organizations have been banned. The Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam, the largest religious organization in Vietnam, has been outlawed since 1975.

We ask that you co-sponsor Vietnam Human Rights Act. Its passage in the Senate will send a clear and strong message to the Vietnamese government that expanded trade and partnership with the U.S. must be pre-conditioned on significant improvements in human rights.

Sincerely,

[Your signature]
[Your name]
[Your title in your organization]