

109TH CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

H. RES. 673

Expressing support for the efforts of the people of the Republic of Belarus to establish a full democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights and urging the Government of Belarus to conduct a free and fair presidential election on March 19, 2006.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 14, 2006

Mr. SHIMKUS (for himself and Mr. GALLEGLY) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on International Relations

RESOLUTION

Expressing support for the efforts of the people of the Republic of Belarus to establish a full democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights and urging the Government of Belarus to conduct a free and fair presidential election on March 19, 2006.

Whereas the establishment of a democratic, transparent, and fair election process for the 2006 presidential election in the Republic of Belarus and of a genuinely democratic political system are prerequisites for that country's integration into the Western community of nations;

Whereas the Government of Belarus has accepted numerous specific commitments governing the conduct of elections as a participating State of the Organization for Security

and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), including provisions of the 1990 Copenhagen Document;

Whereas these commitments, which encourage transparency, balance, and impartiality in an election process, have become the standard by which observers determine whether elections have been conducted freely and fairly;

Whereas the election on March 19, 2006, of the next president of Belarus will provide an unambiguous test of the extent of the commitment of the Belarusian authorities to implement these standards and build a democratic society based on free elections and the rule of law;

Whereas previous elections in Belarus have not met international standards;

Whereas the 2004 vote on the constitutional referendum in Belarus did not meet international standards;

Whereas it is the duty of government and public authorities at all levels to act in a manner consistent with all laws and regulations governing election procedures and to ensure free and fair elections throughout the entire country, including preventing activities aimed at undermining the free exercise of political rights;

Whereas a genuinely free and fair election requires a period of political campaigning conducted in an environment in which neither administrative action nor violence, intimidation, or detention hinder the parties, political associations, and the candidates from presenting their views and qualifications to the citizenry, including organizing supporters, conducting public meetings and events throughout the country, and enjoying unimpeded access to television, radio, print, and Internet media on an equal basis;

Whereas a genuinely free and fair election requires that citizens be guaranteed the right and effective opportunity to exercise their civil and political rights, including the right to vote free from intimidation, threats of political retribution, or other forms of coercion by national or local authorities or others;

Whereas a genuinely free and fair election requires the full transparency of laws and regulations governing elections, multiparty representation on election commissions, and unobstructed access by candidates, political parties, and domestic and international observers to all election procedures, including voting and vote-counting in all areas of the country;

Whereas control and manipulation of the media by national and local officials and others acting at their behest could raise grave concerns regarding the commitment of the Belarusian authorities to free and fair elections;

Whereas efforts by national and local officials and others acting at their behest to impose obstacles to free assembly, free speech, and a free and fair political campaign will call into question the fairness of the upcoming election in Belarus; and

Whereas the arrest or intimidation of opposition political parties and candidates, such as the leader of the Unified Democratic Forces and other people involved with the opposition, represents a deliberate assault on the democratic process: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) looks forward to the development of cordial
3 relations between the United States and the Repub-
4 lic of Belarus;

1 (2) emphasizes that a precondition for the inte-
2 gration of Belarus into the Western community of
3 nations is its establishment of a genuinely demo-
4 cratic political system;

5 (3) expresses its strong and continuing support
6 for the efforts of the Belarusian people to establish
7 a full democracy, the rule of law, and respect for
8 human rights in Belarus;

9 (4) urges the Government of Belarus to guar-
10 antee freedom of association and assembly, including
11 the right of candidates, members of political parties,
12 and others to freely assemble, to organize and con-
13 duct public events, and to exercise these and other
14 rights free from intimidation or harassment by na-
15 tional or local officials or others acting at their be-
16 hest;

17 (5) urges the Government of Belarus to meet
18 its Organization for Security and Cooperation in Eu-
19 rope (OSCE) standards and commitments on demo-
20 cratic elections, including the standards on free and
21 fair elections as defined in the 1990 Copenhagen
22 Document;

23 (6) urges the Belarusian authorities to en-
24 sure—

1 (A) the full transparency of election proce-
2 dures before, during, and after the 2006 presi-
3 dential election;

4 (B) unobstructed access by election mon-
5 itors from the Office of Democratic Institutions
6 and Human Rights (ODIHR), other partici-
7 pating States of the OSCE, Belarusian political
8 parties, candidates' representatives, nongovern-
9 mental organizations, and other private institu-
10 tions and organizations—both foreign and do-
11 mestic—to all aspects of the election process,
12 including unimpeded access to public campaign
13 events, candidates, news media, voting, and
14 post-election tabulation of results and proc-
15 essing of election challenges and complaints;

16 (C) multiparty representation on all elec-
17 tion commissions;

18 (D) unimpeded access by all parties and
19 candidates to print, radio, television, and Inter-
20 net media on a non-discriminatory basis;

21 (E) freedom of candidates, members of op-
22 position parties, and independent media organi-
23 zations from intimidation or harassment by
24 government officials at all levels via selective
25 tax audits and other regulatory and bureau-

1 cratic procedures, and in the case of media, li-
2 cense revocations and libel suits, among other
3 measures;

4 (F) a transparent process for complaint
5 and appeals through electoral commissions and
6 within the court system that provides timely
7 and effective remedies; and

8 (G) vigorous prosecution of any individual
9 or organization responsible for violations of
10 election laws or regulations, including the appli-
11 cation of appropriate administrative or criminal
12 penalties;

13 (7) encourages the international community, in-
14 cluding the Council of Europe, the OSCE, and the
15 OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, to continue their ef-
16 forts to support democracy in Belarus and urges
17 countries such as Lithuania and other Baltic coun-
18 tries and Nordic countries to continue to provide as-
19 sistance to nongovernmental organizations and other
20 Belarusian organizations involved in promoting de-
21 mocracy and fair elections in Belarus; and

22 (8) pledges its support to the Belarusian peo-
23 ple, their commitment to a fully free and open demo-
24 cratic system, their creation of a prosperous free
25 market economy, and their country's assumption of

- 1 its rightful place as a full and equal member of the
- 2 Western community of democracies.

