

and Vice President. The peaceful and orderly manner in which these elections have been carried out, with the participation of ten parties representing the entire political spectrum, is proof of El Salvador's commitment to democracy, national reconciliation and reconstruction. Specifically, it demonstrates their ability to implement the provisions of the 1992 peace accords.

The United States must continue to support the efforts of the people of El Salvador to ensure political stability and the strengthening of the democratic process.

This progress however is being threatened in the wake of Hurricane Mitch. It is paramount that the United States take the lead in helping the region recover from the devastation of the hurricane. If it does not, we risk the unraveling of a fragile democracy and a return to the political instability that the region experienced for decades and threatened our national interests.

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this resolution congratulating the people and government of El Salvador on the free and democratic elections held last month.

The people of El Salvador know that the transition to democracy is rarely easy. However, in only a few short years, El Salvador has made great progress. Both international and domestic observers agree that the recent multiparty Presidential and Vice Presidential elections were free and fair.

These elections showed the strength and diversity of El Salvador's new democracy. They showed that political parties can engage in the type of substantive, peaceful debate that would have been unheard of only a few years ago.

But the demands of democracy do not stop with free elections. El Salvador has shown a commitment to democratic ideals by embracing a free press, freedom of religion, and freedom of association. Because there is no government in the world today that couldn't benefit from improvement, I encourage the people and government of El Salvador to seize upon their recent success and work toward improving their new democracy and the rule of law.

Mr. Speaker, dozens of nations are at a crossroads today. Because democracies are not always neat and tidy, many will be tempted to take the easy path. But the easy path leads toward authoritarianism and inevitably to exploitation. The path toward democracy is sometimes difficult and it is often unsightly. But El Salvador's success stands out as an example of what can be accomplished by choosing the path toward democracy.

Today we congratulate those who have made democracy possible in El Salvador.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. EWING). The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, House Resolution 110.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

CONGRATULATING QATAR FOR COMMITMENT TO DEMOCRATIC IDEALS AND WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 35) congratulating the State of Qatar and its citizens for their commitment to democratic ideals and women's suffrage on the occasion of Qatar's historic elections of a central municipal council on March 8, 1999, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 35

Whereas His Highness, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, the Emir of Qatar, issued a decree creating a central municipal council, the first of its kind in Qatar;

Whereas on March 8, 1999, the people of the State of Qatar held direct elections for a central municipal council;

Whereas the central municipal council has been structured to have members from 29 election districts serving 4-year terms;

Whereas Qatari women were granted the right to participate in this historic first municipal election, both as candidates and voters;

Whereas this election demonstrates the strength and diversity of the State of Qatar's commitment to democratic expression;

Whereas the United States highly values democracy and women's rights;

Whereas March 8 is recognized as International Women's Day, and is an occasion to assess the progress of the advancement of women and girls throughout the world; and

Whereas this historic event of democratic elections and women's suffrage in the State of Qatar should be honored: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That the Congress—

(1) commends His Highness, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, the Emir of Qatar, for his leadership and commitment to suffrage and the principles of democracy;

(2) congratulates the citizens of the State of Qatar as they celebrate the historic election for a central municipal council; and

(3) reaffirms that the United States is strongly committed to encouraging the suffrage of women, democratic ideals, and peaceful development throughout the Middle East.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) and the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN).

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on this measure.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to enter into the RECORD

and say the remarks that the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN), were he here, would be delivering. He is at the White House today. I would like to give his remarks.

Mr. Speaker, the resolution before us today is House Concurrent Resolution 35, a concurrent resolution congratulating the State of Qatar and its citizens for their commitment to democratic ideals and women's suffrage on the occasion of Qatar's historic elections of a central municipal council on March 8, 1999.

The gentleman from New York is the primary sponsor of this measure and wanted to particularly thank the co-chairs of the Congressional Women's Caucus, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) and the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. KELLY), for their support for these elections and their cosponsorship of this resolution.

Qatar is a strong ally of the United States in the Persian Gulf and is moving toward the 21st century under the leadership of His Highness, Sheikh Hamad, the Emir of Qatar. That leadership includes expanding the civic contribution to Qatar's governance.

Our colleagues will agree that the United States highly values democracy and women's rights. So we were more than pleased to learn of the successful municipal elections that Qatar had conducted in which women, as well as men, were granted the right to vote and run as candidates.

House Concurrent Resolution 35 applauds the Emir of Qatar for his leadership and commends the citizens of Qatar for participating in this important civic function. Clearly, this election demonstrates the strength and diversity of the State of Qatar's commitment to democratic expression.

House Concurrent Resolution 35 also reaffirms that the United States is strongly committed to encouraging the suffrage of women, of democratic ideals, and peaceful development throughout the Middle East.

We therefore were pleased to learn that the Qatari Government is in the process of drafting a constitution. This document, once adopted, will cause the creation of a Qatari parliament.

Mr. Speaker, in discussions with Qatari officials, they informed us that the State of Qatar considers the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan as their structural model. Congress therefore looks forward to these developments and to maintaining and strengthening its relationship with Qatar.

House Concurrent Resolution 35 celebrates an important milestone in the development of Qatar, and I urge our colleagues to join me in extending our congratulations to all its citizens by lending their support to this important resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. I rise in support of House Concurrent Resolution 35, regarding the recent historic

elections of a central municipal council in Qatar, and I strongly commend the co-chairs of our Women's Caucus, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) and the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. KELLY), who traveled to Qatar to monitor these elections.

Mr. Speaker, the decree issued by the Emir of Qatar establishing the central municipal council was the first of its kind. The council was structured to have members from 29 election districts serving 4-year terms. For the first time in Qatar history, open elections were ordered and in an unprecedented decision women were granted the right to participate both as candidates and as voters. While these elections were at the municipal level, they were an important expression of a commitment to democratic ideals and the first step toward advancing women's rights in the region. The elections took place on March 8, 1999, a day also celebrated as International Women's Day, further emphasizing the significance of women's suffrage. It is important for the United States Congress to recognize this historic event and to support it as a turning point towards democracy and equal rights for women in Qatar.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be here today in support of H. Con. Res. 35 to honor the State of Qatar and its citizens on the historic elections that took place there on March 8. I am pleased to have this opportunity to share my recent experiences in Qatar.

I had the great honor to travel to this Persian Gulf country as an election observer with my colleague SUE KELLY, with whom I serve as co-chair of the Women's Caucus.

This marks an historic step toward women having seats at all tables, not only the kitchen table, but the peace table, the economic development table, and international affairs table. All of these opportunities begin with full voting privileges for both men and women—a first among the Gulf Cooperation Council countries of the world.

By comparison, Kuwait has an elected parliament which exercises limited legislative and oversight powers, but women are not allowed to vote.

Oman has an elected Consultative Council, however only selected male and female citizens are enfranchised and the Sultan retains the final say over the composition of the Council.

Bahrain had an elected parliament which was dissolved by the Emir in 1975.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia have no elected institutions.

I congratulate the citizens of Qatar on this important step for women. It took America 145 years to give women the right to vote; it took Qatar only 27 years. It is wonderful to see Qatar giving rights to women while other countries like Afghanistan are taking them away. In Afghanistan, women and girls are not permitted to work or to go to school, and they have limited access to health care or prenatal care.

We live in a world economy and we must recognize that elections and democracy help us in our shared world. An elected government is a more stable government. Qatar's

step toward democracy directly benefits the United States because it leads us toward stability and peace. It is important for our nation to support the democratic steps of our allies in the Persian Gulf.

It is important to remember that democracy is a journey, not a destination. With the historic step of allowing both men and women to participate in its first-ever municipal elections, Qatar has taken the first step toward embracing democracy.

The Emir, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, is committed to democracy and has even talked of continuing towards democracy by having an elected parliament. He has already made great strides in education and economic development. I was proud to represent the United States and meet with members of Parliament from United Kingdom, France, Germany, Lebanon, Jordan, Morocco, Oman and Kuwait—who came to witness these historic elections.

I was impressed by how carefully planned the election was. Two hundred and forty-two candidates ran in 29 election districts to serve four-year terms on a central municipal council. Six women ran for office. While none of the women won, Dr. Wadha Al Suwaidi came in second in her district by only 28 votes to Nasser Faleh al Dosari.

I had the opportunity to meet with many candidates. They were well educated, and well prepared. Many had very impressive credentials as ambassadors, teachers, and each had prepared a platform of issues on everything from libraries, bridges, and garbage to parks, nurseries, and recycling.

The scene on election day was extraordinary. It looked a lot like an American election, complete with banners, posters and campaign materials. The election was held on a national holiday and schools and many businesses were closed. Many schools were used as polling places, and candidates set up nearby tents to continue campaigning throughout the day.

We saw many long lines in Qatar, and there was a better than 95 percent voter turnout of the registered voters. It reminded me of the long lines seen during South Africa's first election with people standing in lines for hours in the hot sun.

It was a very fair election. They even sealed the ballot boxes with wax during prayer breaks.

I met with many of the candidates. One of the female candidates who I met, Mouza Abdullah Al-Maliki, has been working for the vote for several years. In 1993, she was part of a group that petitioned the previous Emir for the vote. She is very grateful to have the vote. She told me, "It means democracy, it means freedom, it means awareness for women in all aspects of her life."

To celebrate the first ever direct elections in which women have been allowed to participate in the Gulf, it is important that we pass H. Con. Res. 35 congratulating Qatar on its historic elections. I hope that we will be able to move this bill quickly to show America's support for democracy and universal suffrage throughout the world.

ADDITIONAL FACTS

Dr. Wadha al Suwaidi came in second in her district by only 28 votes to Nasser Faleh al Dosari. This is very significant because 50 women in her district didn't vote.

Of the approximately 600,000 people in the country, there are 150,000 Qatari citizens. Of

these, about 75,000 are eligible (over age 18 and not a member of the police or military force.) Approximately 23,000 registered, which was split almost 50–50 between men and women.

I saw our American embassy in Qatar, which was recently evacuated. It stood—exposed and vulnerable—right on a busy intersection. Our embassy workers are currently working in makeshift areas, some are even working out of their homes. I hope that work on the new embassy continues, and that our state department personnel will soon be able to work in a safer environment.

In Lebanon, 3 of 128 Members of Parliament are women. One of them is Mouauad Naela whose daughter lives in New York City.

Mrs. KELLY. Mr. Speaker, first I would like to thank Chairman GILMAN, and Ranking Member GEJDENSON for giving me time to share my support for H. Con. Res. 35, as well as observations from my trip to Qatar last month.

I recently visited Qatar with my colleague, CAROLYN MALONEY, to witness their historic election on March 8, and lend encouragement to the process that they are beginning. While we were in Qatar, we had the opportunity to meet with the women candidates and Qatari citizens, as well as the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the Foreign Minister and the Emir's wife, Shaykha Mouza who has been a leader in the effort to bring American institutions of higher education to Qatar in addition to organizing the municipal council elections, which took place on March 8.

In many countries in that region, women lead very sheltered lives and are unable to do many activities that we take for granted. Women are often unable to drive, much less go on to study in college. In Qatar, we saw women doing these things. We saw them everywhere you would expect to see women here in the U.S. interacting in a perfectly normal way, the same way that we do in many instances. This is rather progressive stance for many countries in this region.

On election day, as I traveled with other members of the delegation to the election sites, I was quite pleased to see the widespread support for the elections and the candidates. The election sites were full of life. Campaign materials and supporters were abundant. Qataris were lined up waiting to have their chance to cast their vote. What is more, I think that there are lessons we could learn from the candidates in Qatar as they sat together, sharing coffee with each other, each wishing the other success, even though they were running against one another. They were there together celebrating the beginnings of democracy and representation.

I also thought that the elections were well organized, those who worked at the polling sites did so with the dignity and excitement one would expect for a nation's first endeavor towards democracy.

I realize that there has been concern about the relatively low number of people eligible to vote in the elections. There are approximately 160,000–180,000 citizens in the nation. Just as in the United States there is eligibility criteria for voting. In order to be able to vote, you must be the daughter or son of a father who is a Qatari citizen and was born and raised there. As in the U.S., 18 is the minimum voting age, and the last criteria is, interestingly enough, that the person cannot be a member of the military or be employed by the Ministry

of the Interior. The Qataris have concerns about mixing politics and their military forces. The final number of those eligible to vote has not been reported. However, we do know that of the approximate 22,000 people registered to vote, approximately 45% were women.

The queen, Shaykha Mouza spoke to the issue of the careful balance that needs to be struck between the traditional, conservative aspects of their society and the drive to move towards a parliamentary democracy. This is only the first election for a municipal council which is advisory in nature, but it is a valid step. I believe that it is important for us and for Qatar, that we pass this resolution congratulating the Emir's efforts on behalf of his nation.

As we all know, governing is a difficult task. It is a deliberative and often slow process, but the important thing is that the process moves forward. We need to salute and congratulate this nation for their step forward and encourage them to continue on their journey to the great experiment called democracy.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, House Concurrent Resolution 35, as amended.

The question was taken.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

MICROENTERPRISE FOR SELF-RELIANCE ACT OF 1999

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 136 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 136

Resolved, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 1143) to establish a program to provide assistance for programs of credit and other financial services for microenterprises in developing countries, and for other purposes. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. Points of order against consideration of the bill for failure to comply with clause 4(a) of rule XIII are waived. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on International Relations. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. Each section of the bill shall be considered as read. During consideration of the bill for amendment, the chairman of the Committee of the Whole may accord priority in recognition on the basis of whether the

Member offering an amendment has caused it to be printed in the portion of the Congressional Record designated for that purpose in clause 8 of rule XVIII. Amendments so printed shall be considered as read. The chairman of the Committee of the Whole may: (1) postpone until a time during further consideration in the Committee of the Whole a request for a recorded vote on any amendment; and (2) reduce to five minutes the minimum time for electronic voting on any postponed question that follows another electronic vote without intervening business, provided that the minimum time for electronic voting on the first in any series of questions shall be 15 minutes. At the conclusion of consideration of the bill for amendment the Committee shall rise and report the bill to the House with such amendments as may have been adopted. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

□ 1145

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. Ewing). The gentleman from Florida (Mr. DIAZ-BALART) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Speaker, for purposes of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. HALL), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

House Resolution 136 is an open rule providing for the consideration of H.R. 1143, the Microenterprise for Self-Reliance Act of 1999. The purpose of the legislation is to establish a program to provide assistance for programs of credit and other financial services for microenterprises in developing countries. The rule provides for the customary 1 hour of general debate, equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on International Relations.

The rule waives clause 4(a) of rule XIII requiring a 3-day layover of the committee report against consideration of the bill. In addition, the rule provides that the bill shall be read by section. The rule permits the Chair to grant priority in recognition to Members who have preprinted their amendments and considers them as read.

Further, as has become standard practice in this Congress, the Chair is allowed to postpone recorded votes and to reduce the time for electronic voting on postponed votes, and finally the rule provides for one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

Mr. Speaker, to keep with our record of fair rules for the 106th Congress, I am pleased to report that this resolution is yet another open rule that affords any Member the opportunity to offer any germane amendments.

House Resolution 1143 is much needed legislation to enhance credit opportunities for microenterprises in developing countries. These businesses are so small, 10 or fewer employees, and the average loan is so low; most are

less than \$300; that they are thought of as microenterprises as opposed to small businesses. Microenterprises are the economy of the very poorest segment of the economy in developing countries, and estimates of their number range from one-third to perhaps one-half of the world's businesses.

Microenterprises have been an area of interest for U.S. foreign assistance for many years. In 1994, the USA, USAID, formally launched the microenterprise initiative in partnership with Congress to expand funding for that department's microenterprise programs. The summit's goal for that year was to target half of the microenterprise resources to serve the poorest with loans under \$300.

The ability to obtain credit is one of the most important factors in starting or expanding a microenterprise. Often these loan amounts are so low that a commercial bank would not find them profitable, or an entrepreneur has very little in the way of collateral, so the bank would consider them too risky. Yet most micro-loan institutions boast repayment rates of 97 percent or better, putting them at least on a par with major banks who lend to more affluent and traditional borrowers. I believe that supporting microentrepreneurs is an excellent investment in dramatically improving the quality of life of millions throughout the world. Providing access to loans can help low-income entrepreneurs expand their inventory or even hire additional employees and can truly enhance a person's self-esteem by giving him or her a genuine opportunity in life.

In addition, microfinance can serve as a powerful tool for building a more inclusive financial sector which serves the broad majority of the world's population, including the very poor and women, and thus generates more social stability and prosperity. This legislation states that the United States should coordinate among the G-7 nations to bolster support for the microenterprise sector by leveraging our investment with that of other donor nations.

H.R. 1143 appropriately makes microenterprise development an important component of U.S. foreign economic policy and assistance by expanding on the commitment of the USAID in its 1994 microenterprise initiative. I believe that in improving the access of the poorest, especially women, to much needed financial resources in developing countries will lead to the development of free, open and equitable international economic systems and contribute to the spread of freedom and human dignity in the world.

I would like to commend the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN), the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN), my dear colleague from the Committee on Rules, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. HALL), and the others who have worked so hard on this legislation for their efforts in bringing this very important bipartisan bill forward. I strongly support H.R. 1143 and