

BELARUS DEMOCRACY
REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2006

Mr. GALLEGLY. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5948) to reauthorize the Belarus Democracy Act of 2004, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 5948

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Belarus Democracy Reauthorization Act of 2006”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Section 2 of the Belarus Democracy Act of 2004 (22 U.S.C. 5811 note) is amended to read as follows:

“SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

“Congress makes the following findings:

“(1) The Government of the Republic of Belarus has engaged in a pattern of clear and uncorrected violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

“(2) The Government of Belarus has engaged in a pattern of clear and uncorrected violations of basic principles of democratic governance, including through a series of fundamentally flawed presidential and parliamentary elections undermining the legitimacy of executive and legislative authority in that country.

“(3) The most recent presidential elections in Belarus held on March 19, 2006, failed to meet the commitments of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) for democratic elections and the arbitrary use of state power and widespread detentions show a disregard for the basic rights of freedom of assembly, association, and expression, and raise doubts regarding the willingness of authorities in Belarus to tolerate political competition.

“(4) The regime of Aleksandr Lukashenka has maintained power in Belarus by orchestrating an illegal and unconstitutional referendum that enabled him to impose a new constitution, abolish the duly-elected parliament, the 13th Supreme Soviet, install a largely powerless National Assembly, extend his term of office, and remove applicable term limits.

“(5) The Government of Belarus has failed to make a credible effort to solve the cases of disappeared opposition figures Yuri Zakharenka, Viktor Gonchar, and Anatoly Krasovskiy in 1999 and journalist Dmitry Zavadsky in 2000, even though credible allegations and evidence exist linking top officials of the Lukashenka regime with these disappearances.

“(6) Political opposition figures Aleksandr Kozulin, Tsimafei Dranchuk, Mikalay Astreyka, Artur Finkevich, Mikalay Razumau, Katsyaryna Sadouskaya, Zmitser Dashkevich, Mikhail Marynich, Mikalay Statkevych, Pavel Sevyarinets, Andrei Klimau, Valery Levaneusky, and Siarhei Skrebets have been imprisoned or served ‘corrective labor’ sentences because of their political activity.

“(7) Hundreds of pro-democratic political activists have been subjected to frequent harassment and jailings, especially during, and in the aftermath of the fatally flawed March 19, 2006, presidential elections in Belarus.

“(8) The Government of Belarus has attempted to maintain a monopoly over the country’s information space, targeting independent media for systematic reprisals and elimination, while suppressing the right to freedom of speech and expression of those dissenting from the regime.

“(9) The Belarusian authorities have perpetuated a climate of fear in Belarus by mounting a systematic crackdown on civil society through the harassment, repression, and closure of nongovernmental organizations and independent trade unions.

“(10) The Lukashenka regime has increasingly subjected leaders and members of minority and unregistered religious communities to harassment, including the imposition of heavy fines, denying permission to meet for religious services, prosecutions, and jail terms for activities in the practice of their faith.

“(11) The Belarusian authorities have further attempted to silence dissent through retribution against human rights and pro-democracy activists through threats, firings, expulsions, beatings and other forms of intimidation.”.

SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.

The Belarus Democracy Act of 2004 (22 U.S.C. 5811 note) is amended—

(1) by striking section 8;

(2) by redesignating sections 3 through 7 as sections 4 through 8, respectively; and

(3) by inserting after section 2 the following new section:

“SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.

“It is the policy of the United States—

“(1) to call upon the immediate release without preconditions of all political prisoners in Belarus;

“(2) to support the aspirations of the people of the Republic of Belarus for democracy, human rights, and the rule of law;

“(3) to support the aspirations of the people of the Republic of Belarus to preserve the independence and sovereignty of their country;

“(4) to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in Belarus, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in that country;

“(5) to refuse to accept the results of the fatally flawed March 19, 2006, presidential elections held in Belarus and support the call for new presidential elections;

“(6) to refuse to recognize any possible referendum, or the results of any referendum, that would affect the sovereignty of Belarus; and

“(7) to work closely with other countries and international organizations, including the European Union, to promote the conditions necessary for the integration of Belarus into the European community of democracies.”.

SEC. 4. ASSISTANCE TO PROMOTE DEMOCRACY AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN BELARUS.

(a) PURPOSES OF ASSISTANCE.—Section 4(a) of the Belarus Democracy Act of 2004 (22 U.S.C. 5811 note) (as redesignated) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), by striking “regaining their freedom and to enable them” and inserting “their pursuit of freedom, democracy, and human rights and in their aspiration”;

(2) in paragraph (2)—

(A) by striking “free and fair” and inserting “free, fair, and transparent”; and

(B) by adding at the end before the period the following: “and independent domestic observers”; and

(3) in paragraph (3), by striking “restoring and strengthening institutions of democratic governance” and inserting “the development of a democratic political culture and civil society”.

(b) ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED.—Section 4(c) of the Belarus Democracy Act of 2004 (22 U.S.C. 5811 note) (as redesignated) is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraphs (6) and (7) as paragraphs (7) and (8), respectively;

(2) by striking paragraphs (1) through (5) and inserting the following new paragraphs:

“(1) expanding independent radio and television broadcasting to and within Belarus;

“(2) facilitating the development of independent broadcast, print, and Internet media working within Belarus and from locations outside the country and supported by nonstate-controlled printing facilities;

“(3) aiding the development of civil society through assistance to nongovernmental organizations promoting democracy and supporting human rights, including youth groups, entrepreneurs, and independent trade unions;

“(4) supporting the work of human rights defenders;

“(5) enhancing the development of democratic political parties;

“(6) assisting the promotion of free, fair, and transparent electoral processes;” and

(3) in paragraph (7) (as redesignated), by inserting “enhancing” before “international exchanges”.

(c) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

(1) AMENDMENT.—Section 4(d)(1) of the Belarus Democracy Act of 2004 (22 U.S.C. 5811 note) (as redesignated) is amended by striking “2005 and 2006” and inserting “2007 and 2008”.

(2) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—The amendment made by paragraph (1) shall not be construed to affect the availability of funds appropriated pursuant to the authorization of appropriations under section 4(d) of the Belarus Democracy Act of 2004 (as redesignated) before the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 5. RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING TO BELARUS.

(a) PURPOSE.—Section 5(a) of the Belarus Democracy Act of 2004 (22 U.S.C. 5811 note) (as redesignated) is amended by striking “RADIO BROADCASTING” and inserting “RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING”.

(b) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—Section 5(b) of the Belarus Democracy Act of 2004 (22 U.S.C. 5811 note) (as redesignated) is amended by striking “radio broadcasting” and inserting “radio and television broadcasting”.

(c) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 5 of the Belarus Democracy Act of 2004 (22 U.S.C. 5811 note) (as redesignated) is amended in the heading by striking “radio broadcasting” and inserting “radio and television broadcasting”.

SEC. 6. SANCTIONS AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT OF BELARUS.

Section 6 of the Belarus Democracy Act of 2004 (22 U.S.C. 5811 note) (as redesignated) is amended to read as follows:

“SEC. 6. SANCTIONS AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT OF BELARUS.

“(a) APPLICATION OF SANCTIONS.—The sanctions described in subsections (c) through (f) should apply with respect to the Republic of Belarus until the President determines and certifies to the appropriate congressional committees that the Government of Belarus has made significant progress in meeting the conditions described in subsection (b).

“(b) CONDITIONS.—The conditions referred to in subsection (a) are the following:

“(1) The release of individuals in Belarus who have been jailed based on political or religious beliefs.

“(2) The withdrawal of politically motivated legal charges against all opposition activists and independent journalists in Belarus.

“(3) A full accounting of the disappearances of opposition leaders and journalists in Belarus, including Victor Gonchar, Anatoly Krasovskiy, Yuri Zakharenka, and Dmitry Zavadsky, and the prosecution of those individuals who are in any way responsible for their disappearances.

“(4) The cessation of all forms of harassment and repression against the independent

media, independent trade unions, nongovernmental organizations, youth groups, religious organizations (including their leadership and members), and the political opposition in Belarus.

“(5) The prosecution of senior leadership of the Government of Belarus responsible for the administration of fraudulent elections.

“(6) A full accounting of the embezzlement of state assets by senior leadership of the Government of Belarus, their family members, and other associates.

“(7) The holding of free, fair and transparent presidential and parliamentary elections in Belarus consistent with OSCE standards and under the supervision of internationally recognized observers and independent domestic observers.

“(C) DENIAL OF ENTRY INTO THE UNITED STATES OF SENIOR LEADERSHIP OF THE GOVERNMENT OF BELARUS.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the President may exercise the authority under section 212(f) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1182(f)) to deny the entry into the United States of any alien who—

“(1) holds a position in the senior leadership of the Government of Belarus;

“(2) is an immediate family member of a person inadmissible under subparagraph (A); or

“(3) through his or her business dealings with senior leadership of the Government of Belarus derives significant financial benefit from policies or actions, including electoral fraud, human rights abuses, or corruption, that undermine or injure democratic institutions or impede the transition to democracy in Belarus.

“(d) PROHIBITION ON LOANS AND INVESTMENT.—

“(1) UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT FINANCING.—It is the sense of Congress that no loan, credit guarantee, insurance, financing, or other similar financial assistance should be extended by any agency of the Government of the United States (including the Export-Import Bank of the United States and the Overseas Private Investment Corporation) to the Government of Belarus, except with respect to the provision of humanitarian goods and agricultural or medical products.

“(2) TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY.—It is the sense of Congress that no funds available to the Trade and Development Agency should be available for activities of the Agency in or for Belarus.

“(e) MULTILATERAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary of the Treasury should instruct the United States Executive Director of each international financial institution to which the United States is a member to use the voice and vote of the United States to oppose any extension by those institutions of any financial assistance (including any technical assistance or grant) of any kind to the Government of Belarus, except for loans and assistance that serve humanitarian needs.

“(f) BLOCKING OF ASSETS AND OTHER PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES.—

“(1) BLOCKING OF ASSETS.—It is the sense of Congress that the President should block all property and interests in property, including all commercial, industrial, or public utility undertakings or entities, that, on or after the date of the enactment of the Belarus Democracy Reauthorization Act of 2006—

“(A) are owned, in whole or in part, by the Government of Belarus, or by any member or family member closely linked to any member of the senior leadership of the Government of Belarus, or any person who through his or her business dealings with senior leadership of the Government of Belarus derives significant financial benefit from policies or actions, including electoral fraud, human rights abuses, or corruption, that undermine

or injure democratic institutions or impede the transition to democracy in Belarus; and

“(B) are in the United States, or in the possession or control of the Government of the United States or of any United States financial institution, including any branch or office of such financial institution that is located outside the United States.

“(2) PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES.—Activities prohibited by reason of the blocking of property and interests in property under paragraph (1) should include—

“(A) payments or transfers of any property, or any transactions involving the transfer of anything of economic value by any United States person, to the Government of Belarus, to any person or entity acting for or on behalf of, or owned or controlled, directly or indirectly, by that government, or to any member of the senior leadership of the Government of Belarus;

“(B) the export or reexport to any entity owned, controlled, or operated by the Government of Belarus, directly or indirectly, of any goods, technology, or services, either—

“(i) by a United States person; or

“(ii) involving the use of any air carrier (as defined in section 40102 of title 49, United States Code) or a vessel documented under the laws of the United States; and

“(C) the performance by any United States person of any contract, including a contract providing a loan or other financing, in support of an industrial, commercial, or public utility operated, controlled, or owned by the Government of Belarus.

“(3) PAYMENT OF EXPENSES.—All expenses incident to the blocking and maintenance of property blocked under paragraph (1) should be charged to the owners or operators of such property. Such expenses may not be paid from blocked funds.

“(4) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to prohibit any contract or other financial transaction with any private or nongovernmental organization or business in Belarus.

“(5) EXCEPTIONS.—Paragraphs (1) and (2) do not apply to—

“(A) assistance authorized under section 4 or 5 of this Act; or

“(B) medicine, medical equipment or supplies, food, as well as any other form of humanitarian assistance provided to Belarus as relief in response to a humanitarian crisis.

“(6) PENALTIES.—Any person who violates any prohibition or restriction imposed under this subsection should be subject to the penalties under section 6 of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1705) to the same extent as for a violation under that Act.

“(7) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection:

“(A) AIR CARRIER.—The term ‘air carrier’ has the meaning given that term in section 40102 of title 49, United States Code.

“(B) UNITED STATES PERSON.—The term ‘United States person’ means—

“(i) any United States citizen or alien admitted for permanent residence to the United States;

“(ii) any entity organized under the laws of the United States; and

“(iii) any person in the United States.”

SEC. 7. MULTILATERAL COOPERATION.

Section 7 of the Belarus Democracy Act of 2004 (22 U.S.C. 5811 note) (as redesignated) is amended—

(1) by striking “to coordinate with” and inserting “the support of”; and

(2) by striking “a comprehensive” and inserting “for a comprehensive”.

SEC. 8. DEFINITIONS.

Section 9(3) of the Belarus Democracy Act of 2004 (22 U.S.C. 5811 note) is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (A), by inserting “governors, heads of state enterprises,” after “Chairmen of State Committees,”; and

(2) in subparagraph (B)—

(A) by striking “who is” and inserting the following: “who—

“(i) is”;

(B) by striking “and” at the end and inserting “or”; and

(C) by adding at the end the following new clause:

“(ii) is otherwise engaged in public corruption in Belarus; and”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. GALLEGLY) and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GALLEGLY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. GALLEGLY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 5948, the Belarus Democracy Act of 2006, was introduced by my good friend, Representative CHRIS SMITH of New Jersey. I would like to commend Mr. SMITH for his hard work on this issue and also for the work on supporting and promoting human rights throughout the entire world.

This important legislation reauthorizes the original Belarus Democracy Act, which was signed into law by President Bush in October of 2004. Given the anti-democratic track record of the Lukashenka regime in the past 2 years, it is entirely appropriate for Congress to reauthorize this statute.

Mr. Speaker, Belarus is often described as the last dictatorship in Europe, and the situation has only gone from bad to worse. In the past three or four years, President Alexander Lukashenka has increased repression against NGOs, media outlets, and any opponents of the government, including youth groups.

In addition, presidential elections held in March of this year were widely viewed as neither free nor fair.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 5948 promotes democracy or democratic development, human rights and the rule of law in Belarus. It also promotes that countries enter into a democratic Euro-Atlantic community of nations.

The bill authorizes funds for fiscal years 2007 and 2008 for democracy-building activities such as support for nongovernmental organizations, development of democratic political parties and independent media. It also authorizes funds for radio and television broadcasting in Belarus.

Finally, H.R. 5948 puts Congress on record in support of sanctions against the Lukashenka regime until the Government of Belarus has made significant progress in meeting several human rights conditions.

Mr. Speaker, this is an important measure in the support of human rights and democracy in Belarus. At a time when Belarus's neighbors, such as Poland, Ukraine and the Baltic Nations, have democratic governments that respect the rights of their citizens, it is long overdue that the Lukashenka regime provide the same freedoms for its citizens.

Again, I would like to compliment my good friend, Representative SMITH, for his hard work on H.R. 5948 and on behalf of the democracy in Belarus. And I urge the passage of this bill.

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

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 5948, the Belarus Democracy Act of 2006.

Mr. Speaker, as the third wave of democracy spread over Europe since 1989, one country has been conspicuously absent from the momentous changes affecting its neighbors: the continuing dictatorship of Belarus. Regrettably, this continuing communist cancer in the heart of a vibrant democratic Europe threatens to metastasize to its neighbors, threatening the progress of European civilization.

Mr. Speaker, I will not try to provide an in depth catalog of the outrageous abuses of the Lukashenka regime. From stolen elections to suppression of freedom of the press to jailing opposition leaders to oppressing organized labor, the Belarusian strong-arm tactics are well known.

Early this year, after President Alexander Lukashenka won 80 percent of the vote in a fatally flawed and corrupt election for president, police arrested over 100 people protesting Lukashenka's strong-arm tactics. When the head of security services equates protests to terrorism, as the head of the Belarusian KGB did during that campaign, we should all recognize that we must act, and soon.

Some may say that this is an issue where the Europeans should take the lead, and that dealing with Belarus is their responsibility. And the Europeans, despite their divisions, are moving forward on pressuring Belarus to do more to open their society. Just this week, Mr. Speaker, the European Commission announced that it would move ahead to suspend trade preferences to Belarus because it had violated trade union norms.

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We all know that a vigorous defense of the right of association has always been a cornerstone of democratic change, and the Belarussian perfidy, in its own self-declared workers' paradise, has been recognized for what it is, and therefore to maintain a tight Communist grip on power.

Also, the European Union, in giving their top rights award, the Sakharov Award, to the three-time jailed leader of the Belarussian opposition, Mr.

Milinkevich, demonstrates European recognition of the need to support Belarussian human rights defenders and movements supporting Democratic values. I applaud the Commission's action and expect that the EU will adopt its recommendations later this month.

We here in the United States, Mr. Speaker, must play our role in supporting the efforts of our European friends. H.R. 5948 is a step in that direction. It contains efforts to buttress smart sanctions against the leaders of Belarus most responsible for human rights violations, while avoiding sanctions that would hurt the people of Belarus.

It authorizes the President to stop the entry of high-level Belarussian figures involved in state kleptomania, and it provides important support for those democratic movements and human rights advocates who are prepared to stand up to the madmen in Minsk.

Mr. Speaker, I want to applaud my good friend from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) for continuing to fight for those who do not have the good fortune to live in a free and open society, and I look forward to working with him in the next Congress on this important issue.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to mention that the United States needs to think hard about ways in which we can better promote democracy abroad. Democracy and human rights are not a dichotomy, they are different sides of the same coin. That is why I will continue to work in the next Congress towards reforming our foreign policy institutions so that they formulate long-term strategies to promote democracy in alliance with local proponents of democracy and the like-minded friends in the international community.

We need to institutionalize a long-term approach to democracy promotion that is so often lacking in a town that focuses on tomorrow's talking points. I urge all of my colleagues to support this very important piece of legislation.

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

Mr. GALLEGLY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 7 minutes to my good friend, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) who is not only the sponsor of the bill, but also sponsored the 2004 bill.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. I want to thank my distinguished chairman for yielding; ELTON GALLEGLY, thank you so much for your leadership on this legislation.

I want to thank Mr. LANTOS, our ranking member, for his commitment to changing and reforming the last dictatorship in Europe, which is Belarus.

I especially want to thank our good friend and leader, Chairman HYDE, for his staunch belief in democracy and freedom everywhere, including this very troubled country called Belarus.

Mr. Speaker, I do strongly support and urge passage of H.R. 4958, the Belarus Democracy Reauthorization

Act of 2006, to provide sustained support for the promotion of democracy, human rights and the rule of just law in the Republic of Belarus.

I want to thank our speaker, Speaker HASTERT, for his commitment in bringing this legislation before the Congress today. Speaker HASTERT's deep personal interest in the cause of freedom in Belarus was demonstrated at his recent meeting in Vilnius in Lithuania when he met with the leaders of the democratic opposition.

It was very much appreciated by them. I know them, I have worked with them for many years. They got a great boost from his personal intervention on their behalf and for really taking the time to listen and to react to their pleas.

I am happy to say again that this legislation enjoys very broad bipartisan support. As I said, again, I want to thank Mr. LANTOS for his leadership on this as well.

As one who has worked for freedom in Belarus over many, many years, I remain deeply concerned that the Belarussian people continue to be subjected to the arbitrary and self-serving whims of a corrupt and anti-democratic regime headed by Aleksandr Lukashenka. Since the blatantly fraudulent March 19 presidential elections, which the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe condemned as having failed to meet international democratic standards, the pattern of repression and gross violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms has continued.

While those who dare to oppose the regime are especially targeted, roughed up, tortured, thrown into prison, the reality is that all in Belarus, outside of Lukashenka's inner circle, pay a price. Last week in Riga, President Bush pledged support to help the people of Belarus who faced a cruel regime, his words, and apt words, led by President Lukashenka.

The existence, President Bush went on to say, of such oppression in our midst offends the conscience of Europe, and the conscience of America. Mr. Speaker, this legislation would be a concrete expression and expansion of congressional commitment to the Belarussian people and would show that we stand as one in supporting freedom in Belarus.

Just within the last few months, Mr. Speaker, we have witnessed a series of patently political trials designed to further stifle peaceful democratic opposition. In the last few months, the regime continues to show its true colors, punishing those who would dare to challenge the tin-pot dictator, Aleksandr Lukashenka.

Former presidential candidate Aleksandr Kozulin was sentenced to a politically motivated 5½ years' imprisonment for alleged hooliganism and disturbing the peace. His health is precarious, and he is now well into the second month of a hunger strike.

This is only the tip of the iceberg with respect to political repression, as

many other political prisoners continue to languish in prison or so-called corrective labor camps.

By way of background, Mr. Speaker, 3 years ago I introduced the Belarus Democracy Act which passed the House and the Senate with overwhelming bipartisan support and was signed into law by President Bush in October of 2004. Prompt passage of the reauthorization act before us today will help maintain this momentum aimed at upholding the democratic aspirations of the Belarusian people.

With the continuing decline on the ground in Belarus since the fraudulent March elections, this bill is needed now more than ever. This reauthorization bill illustrates the sustained support for Belarus independence. We seek to encourage those struggling for democracy and respect for human rights in the face of formidable pressure and personal risks from this anti-democratic regime. The bill authorizes such sums as may be necessary in assistance for each of fiscal years 2007 and 2008 for democracy-building activities such as support for nongovernmental organizations, including youth groups, independent trade unions and entrepreneurs, human rights defenders, independent media, democratic political parties and international exchanges.

The bill further authorizes money for both radio and television broadcasting to the people of Belarus. While I am encouraged by the recent U.S. and EU initiatives with respect to radio broadcasting, much more needs to be done to penetrate Lukashenka's stifling information blockade.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that the administration will make this a priority. In addition, I hope that the administration would make this, like I said, a priority and much more.

In addition, H.R. 5948 calls for selective sanctions against the Lukashenka regime, and a denial of entry into the United States for senior officials of the regime, as well as those engaged in human rights and electoral abuses.

Mr. Speaker, it is my hope that the Belarus Democracy Reauthorization Act of 2006 will help end the pattern of violations of OSCE human rights and democracy commitments made by the Lukashenka regime and loosen its unhealthy monopoly on political and economic power.

I hope our efforts here today will facilitate independent Belarus's integration into democratic Europe in which the principles of democracy, human rights and rule of law are respected.

Clearly, the beleaguered Belarusian people have suffered so much over the course of the last century and deserve better than to live under a regime frighteningly reminiscent of the Soviet Union.

The struggle of the people of Belarus for dignity and freedom deserves our unyielding and consistent support. This legislation is important and timely, and I urge Members to support it.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly urge passage of H.R. 5948, the Belarus Democracy Reauthor-

ization Act of 2006, to provide sustained support for the promotion of democracy, human rights and the rule of law in the Republic of Belarus, as well as encourage the consolidation and strengthening of Belarus' sovereignty and independence. Mr. Speaker, I especially thank you for your commitment to bring this legislation before this Congress. Your deep personal interest in the cause of freedom in Belarus, as demonstrated by your recent meetings in Vilnius with the leaders of the democratic opposition, has been particularly appreciated by those struggling for the rule of law and basic human freedoms. This legislation enjoys bipartisan support, and I want to recognize and thank the tremendous collaboration of Rep. TOM LANTOS, an original cosponsor of this bill.

As one who has followed developments in Belarus over many years through my work on the Helsinki Commission, I remain deeply concerned that the Belarusian people continue to be subjected to the arbitrary and self-serving whims of a corrupt and anti-democratic regime headed by Aleksandr Lukashenka. Since the blatantly fraudulent March 19 presidential elections, which the OSCE condemned as having failed to meet international democratic standards, the pattern of repression and gross violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. While those who would dare oppose the regime are especially targeted, the reality is that all in Belarus outside Lukashenka's inner circle pay a price.

RECENT NEWS REGARDING LUKASHENKA'S REGIME

Last week in Riga, President Bush pledged to help the people of Belarus in the face of the "cruel regime" led by President Lukashenka. "The existence of such oppression in our midst offends the conscience of Europe and the conscience of America," Bush said, adding that "we have a message for the people of Belarus: the vision of a Europe whole, free and at peace includes you, and we stand with you in your struggle for freedom." Mr. Speaker, this legislation would be a concrete expression of Congress' commitment to the Belarusian people and would show that we stand as one in supporting freedom for Belarus.

Just within the last few months, we have witnessed a series of patently political trials designed to further stifle peaceful, democratic opposition. In October, 60-year-old human rights activist Katerina Sadouskaya was sentenced to two years in a penal colony. Her "crime"? "insulting the honor and dignity of the Belarusian leader." Mr. Speaker, if this isn't reminiscent of the Soviet Union, I don't know what is. And just a few weeks ago, in a closed trial, Belarusian youth activist Zmitser Dashkevich received a one-and-a-half year sentence for "activities on behalf of an unregistered organization."

A report mandated by the Belarus Democracy Act and finally issued this past March reveals Lukashenka's links with rogue regimes such as Iran, Sudan and Syria, and his cronies' corrupt activities. According to an October 9, 2006, International Herald Tribune op-ed: "Alarming, over the last six years, Belarus has intensified its illegal arms shipment activities to the point of becoming the leading supplier of lethal military equipment to Islamic state sponsors of terrorism."

I guess we shouldn't be all that surprised that in July, Lukashenka warmly welcomed to Minsk Venezuela's Hugo Chavez. In keeping

with their bent, both pledged cooperation and denounced the West. More recently, Belarusian Foreign Minister Martynov traveled to Iran where President Ahmadinejad pledged further cooperation in the energy and defense industries. Not long ago, a member of Belarus' bogus parliament asserted on state-controlled radio that Belarus has the right to develop its own nuclear weapons. Mr. Speaker and Colleagues, Belarus is truly an anomaly in Europe, swimming against the rising tide of greater freedom, democracy and economic prosperity.

THE LEGISLATION

Three years ago, I introduced the Belarus Democracy Act which passed the House and Senate with overwhelming bipartisan support and was signed into law by President Bush in October 2004. At that time, the situation in Belarus with respect to democracy and human rights was already abysmal. The need for a sustained U.S. commitment to foster democracy and respect for human rights and to sanction Aleksandr Lukashenka and his cronies, is clear from the intensified anti-democratic policies pursued by the current leadership in Minsk. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that countries throughout Europe have joined in a truly trans-Atlantic effort to bring the promise of freedom to the beleaguered people of Belarus. Prompt passage of the Belarus Democracy Reauthorization Act of 2006 will help maintain this momentum aimed at upholding the democratic aspirations of the Belarusian people. With the continuing decline on the ground in Belarus since the fraudulent March elections, this bill is needed now more than ever.

This reauthorization bill demonstrates the sustained U.S. support for Belarus' independence. We seek to encourage those struggling for democracy and respect for human rights in the face of the formidable pressures and personal risks from the anti-democratic regime. The bill authorizes such sums as may be necessary in assistance for each of fiscal years 2007 and 2008 for democracy-building activities such as support for nongovernmental organizations, including youth groups, independent trade unions and entrepreneurs, human rights defenders, independent media, democratic political parties, and international exchanges.

The bill further authorizes monies for both radio and television broadcasting to the people of Belarus. While I am encouraged by the recent U.S. and EU initiatives with respect to radio broadcasting, much more needs to be done to penetrate Lukashenka's stifling information blockade. Mr. Speaker, I hope that the administration will make this a priority.

In addition, H.R. 5948 calls for selective sanctions against the Lukashenka regime, and the denial of entry into the United States for senior officials of the regime—as well as those engaged in human rights and electoral abuses. In this context, I welcome the punitive sanctions imposed by both the administration and the ED which are targeted against officials—including judges and prosecutors—involved in electoral fraud and other human rights abuses.

The bill expresses the sense of the Congress that strategic exports to the Government of Belarus should be prohibited, except for those intended for democracy building or humanitarian purposes, as well as U.S. Government financing and other foreign assistance.

Of course, we would not want the exports to affect humanitarian goods and agricultural or medical products. The U.S. Executive Directors of the international financial institutions are encouraged to vote against financial assistance to the Government of Belarus except for loans and assistance that serve humanitarian needs. Furthermore, we would encourage the blocking of the assets (in the United States) of members of the Belarus Government as well as the senior leadership and their surrogates. To this end, I welcome the Treasury Department's April 10 advisory to U.S. financial institutions to guard against potential money laundering by Lukashenka and his cronies and strongly applaud President Bush's June 19 "Executive Order Blocking Property of Certain Persons Undermining Democratic Processes or Institutions in Belarus."

Mr. Speaker, I want to make it crystal clear that these sanctions are aimed not at the people of Belarus, but at a regime that displays contempt for the dignity and rights of its citizens even as the corrupt leadership moves to further enrich itself at the expense of all Belarusians.

ONGOING ANTI-DEMOCRATIC BEHAVIOR

To chronicle the full litany of repression over the course of Lukashenka's 12-year misrule would go well beyond the bounds of time available here. Let me cite several more recent illustrations of anti-democratic behavior which testify to the true nature of the regime.

Belarus' March 19 presidential elections can only be described as a farce, and were met with condemnation by the United States, the OSCE, the European Union and others. The Lukashenka regime's wholesale arrests of more than 1,000 opposition activists and dozens of Belarusian and foreign journalists, before and after the elections, and violent suppression of peaceful post-election protests underscore the contempt of the Belarusian authorities toward their countrymen.

Illegitimate parliamentary elections in 2004 and the recently held presidential "elections" in Belarus brazenly flaunted democratic standards. As a result of these elections, Belarus has the distinction of lacking legitimate presidential and parliamentary leadership, which contributes to that country's self-imposed isolation. Albeit safely ensconced in power, Lukashenka has not let up on the democratic opposition. Almost daily repressions constitute a profound abuse of power by a regime that has blatantly manipulated the system to remain in power.

In the last few months, the regime continues to show its true colors, punishing those who would dare to challenge the tinpot dictator. Former presidential candidate Aleksandr Kozulin was sentenced to a politically-motivated five-and-one-half-years' term of imprisonment for alleged "hooliganism" and disturbing the peace. His health is precarious as he is now well into his second month of a hunger strike.

In early August, authorities sentenced four activists of the non-partisan domestic election monitoring initiative "Partnerstva". In a patent attempt to discourage domestic observation of the fraudulent March 19 presidential elections, the four had been kept in custody since February 21. Two were released, having served their six month sentences. Two others—Tsimafei Dranchuk and Mikalay Astreyka—received stiffer sentences, although Astreyka has been released from a medium security

colony and is now in "correctional labor". Other political prisoners, including Artur Finkevich, Mikalay Autukhovich, Audrey Klimau, Ivan Kruk, Yury Lyavonau, Mikalay Razumau, Pavel Sevyarynets, Mikalay Statkevich also continue to have their freedom denied, languishing in prison or in so-called correctional labor camps.

Administrative detentions of ten or fifteen days against democratic opposition activists are almost a daily occurrence. Moreover, the Lukashenka regime continued to stifle religious expression. It refuses to register churches, temporarily detains pastors, threatens to expel foreign clergy, and refuses religious groups the use of premises to hold services. Despite the repressions, Protestant and Catholic congregations have increasingly become more active in their pursuit of religious freedom. I am also concerned about the recent explosion at a Holocaust memorial in western Belarus, the sixth act of vandalism against the monument in 14 years. Unfortunately, the local authorities have reportedly refused to open a criminal investigation. Lukashenka's minions have closed down independent think tanks, further tightened the noose around what remains of the independent media, suspended the activities of a political party, shut down the prominent literary journal *Arche*, and evicted the Union of Belarusian Writers from its headquarters. Of course, Lukashenka's pattern of contempt for human rights is nothing new—it has merely intensified with the passage of time.

Moreover, we have seen no progress on the investigation of the disappearances of political opponents—perhaps not surprisingly, as credible evidence points at the involvement of the Lukashenka regime in their murders.

Mr. Speaker, it is my hope that the Belarus Democracy Reauthorization Act of 2006 will help end to the pattern of violations of OSCE human rights and democracy commitments by the Lukashenka regime and loosen its unhealthy monopoly on political and economic power. I hope our efforts here today will facilitate independent Belarus' integration into democratic Europe in which the principles of democracy, human rights and the rule of law are respected. The beleaguered Belarusian people have suffered so much over the course of the last century and deserve better than to live under a regime frighteningly reminiscent of the Soviet Union. The struggle of the people of Belarus for dignity and freedom deserves our unyielding and consistent support.

This legislation is important and timely because Belarus, which now borders on NATO and the EU, continues to have the worst human rights and democracy record of any European state—bar none.

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

Mr. GALLEGLY. Mr. Speaker, before I yield back, I would just like to say that this is a classic example of sending a message around the world of what America is all about. We stand here in this room, not as Democrats and Republicans, but as individuals fighting oppression and human rights violations around the world.

I applaud CHRIS SMITH for his long-standing leadership. It has been an honor for me to serve with my good friend TOM LANTOS on the other side of the aisle, it doesn't seem possible that

I have been here 20 years, TOM, but he is a colleague from California. He is to be applauded.

I would be remiss if I didn't recognize our mutual friend, HENRY HYDE, a mentor of mine for every year that I have been here on an ongoing basis, who has dedicated much of his life to fighting oppression and the violation of human rights around the world.

HENRY HYDE will be missed, as he is retiring this year, but his legacy will live on, and I hope that is a message we will send to the rest of the world. That is what America is all about.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LATOURETTE). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. GALLEGLY) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5948, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those voting have responded in the affirmative.

Mr. LANTOS. 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 question will be postponed.

PALESTINIAN ANTI-TERRORISM ACT OF 2006

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill (S. 2370) to promote the development of democratic institutions in areas under the administrative control of the Palestinian Authority, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read as follows:

S. 2370

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act of 2006".

SEC. 2. LIMITATION ON ASSISTANCE TO THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY.

(a) DECLARATION OF POLICY.—It shall be the policy of the United States—

(1) to support a peaceful, two-state solution to end the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians in accordance with the Performance-Based Roadmap to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (commonly referred to as the "Roadmap");

(2) to oppose those organizations, individuals, and countries that support terrorism and violently reject a two-state solution to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict;

(3) to promote the rule of law, democracy, the cessation of terrorism and incitement, and good governance in institutions and territories controlled by the Palestinian Authority; and

(4) to urge members of the international community to avoid contact with and refrain from supporting the terrorist organization Hamas until it agrees to recognize Israel, renounce violence, disarm, and accept prior agreements, including the Roadmap.