Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank the gentleman from California (Chairman HORN), who has done an outstanding job in leading to improve the Federal debt collection practices through his diligent legislative oversight activities. The gentleman has worked to assure that the taxpayers get every dollar they are entitled to and no more.

I also want to mention and commend the leadership of the gentleman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY), who has continued her partnership with the gentleman from California (Chairman HORN) since the time she served in the position of ranking member of this Subcommittee.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation. H.R. 1442, as amended, contains provisions designed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Federal debt collection and credit management. It would also assist State and local governments in their efforts to acquire much needed surplus property for law enforcement and emergency response. This legislation has broad bipartisan support, as was evident on the floor. The provisions are the result of a bipartisan effort between majority and minority on the Committee on Government Reform, working closely with the administration.

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transportation, education, health, and energy and on the East-West axis in order to build strong international relations and commerce between those countries and the stable, democratic, and market-oriented countries of the Euro-Atlantic Community; and
(7) to support United States business interests and investments in the region.

SEC. 4. UNITED STATES EFFORTS TO RESOLVE CONFLICTS IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA.

It is the sense of the Congress that the President should use all diplomatic means practicable, including the engagement of senior United States Government officials, to press for an equitable, fair, and permanent resolution to the conflicts in the South Caucasus and Central Asia.

SEC. 5. AMENDMENT TO THE FOREIGN ASSISTANCE ACT OF 1961.

Part I of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2151 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following new chapter:

"CHAPTER 12—SUPPORT FOR THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTRIES OF THE SOUTH CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA"

"SEC. 499. UNITED STATES ASSISTANCE TO PROMOTE HUMANITARIAN AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE FROM REGIONAL CONFLICTS.

(a) Purpose of Assistance.—The purposes of assistance under this section include—
(1) the creation of the basis for reconciliation between belligerents in the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia;
(2) the promotion of economic development in areas of the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia impacted by civil conflict and war; and
(3) the encouragement of broad regional cooperation among countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia that have been destabilized by internal conflicts.

(b) Authorization for Assistance.—
(1) In General.—To carry out the purposes of subsection (a), the President is authorized to provide humanitarian assistance and economic reconstruction assistance for the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia to support the activities described in subsection (c).

(c) Activities Supported.—Activities that may be supported by assistance under subsection (b) include—
(1) providing for the humanitarian needs of victims of the conflicts;
(2) facilitating the return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their homes; and
(3) assisting in the reconstruction of residential and economic infrastructure destroyed by war.

(d) Policy.—It is the sense of the Congress that the United States should, where appropriate, support the establishment of neutral, multinational peacekeeping forces to implement peace agreements reached between belligerents in the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia.

"SEC. 499A. ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE.

(a) Purpose of Assistance.—The purpose of assistance under this section is to foster economic growth and development, including the country for regional economic cooperation, among the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia.

(b) Authorization for Assistance.—To carry out the purpose of subsection (a), the President is authorized to provide assistance for the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia to support the activities described in subsection (c).

(c) Activities Supported.—In addition to the activities described in section 498, activities supported by assistance under subsection (a) shall include—
(1) activities to develop the physical infrastructure necessary for regional cooperation among the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia to support the activities described in subsection (c).

"SEC. 499B. DEVELOPMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE.

(a) Purpose of Programs.—The purposes of programs under this section include—
(1) to develop the physical infrastructure necessary for regional cooperation among the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia to support the activities described in subsection (c);

(b) Authorization for Programs.—To carry out the purposes of subsection (a), the President is authorized to provide the following types of assistance to the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia:

(c) Activities Supported.—Activities that may be supported by programs under subsection (b) include—
(1) activities to develop the physical infrastructure necessary for regional cooperation among the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia to support the activities described in subsection (c);

"SEC. 499C. BORDER CONTROL ASSISTANCE.

(a) Purpose of Assistance.—The purpose of assistance under this section is to foster economic growth and development, including the country for regional economic cooperation, among the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia.

(b) Authorization for Assistance.—To carry out the purpose of subsection (a), the President is authorized to provide assistance for the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia to support the activities described in subsection (c).

(c) Activities Supported.—In addition to the activities described in section 498, activities supported by assistance under subsection (a) shall include—
(1) activities to develop the physical infrastructure necessary for regional economic cooperation among the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia to support the activities described in subsection (c).

"SEC. 499D. STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY, TOLERANCE, AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY.

(a) Purpose of Assistance.—The purpose of assistance under this section is to promote institutions of democratic government and to create the conditions for the growth of pluralistic societies, including religious tolerance and respect for internationally recognized human rights, in the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia.

(b) Authorization for Assistance.—To carry out the purpose of subsection (a), the President is authorized to provide the following types of assistance to the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia:

(1) Assistance for the development of non-governmental organizations.

(2) Assistance for development of independent media.

(3) Assistance for the development of the rule of law, a strong independent judiciary, and transparency in political practice and commercial transactions.

(4) Assistance for democratic reforms and advanced professional training programs in skill areas central to the development of civil society.

(5) Assistance to promote increased adherence to civil and political rights under section 116(e) of this Act.

(6) Assistance to increase levels of democracy, including multi-candidate elections, and the free flow of information and ideas.

"SEC. 499E. INELIGIBILITY FOR ASSISTANCE.

(a) In General.—
(1) Bases for Exclusion.—Subject to paragraph (2), and except as provided in subsection (b), assistance may not be provided under this chapter for the government of a country of the South Caucasus or Central Asia if the President determines and certifies to the appropriate congressional committees that the government of such country—
(A) is engaged in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights;
(b) has, or on or after the date of enactment of this Act, transferred, or knowingly allowed to be transferred through the territory of such country to another country—

(i) missiles or missile technology inconsistent with the guidelines and parameters of the Missile Technology Control Regime (as defined in section 112(c) of the Export Administration Act of 1979 (50 U.S.C. App. 2410b(c)); or

(ii) any material, equipment, or technology that would contribute significantly to the country's ability to manufacture any weapon of mass destruction (including any nuclear, chemical, or biological weapon) if the President determines that the material, equipment, or technology was to be used by such country in the manufacture of such weapons;

(c) has repeatedly provided support for acts of international terrorism;

(d) is prohibited from receiving such assistance by chapter 10 of the Arms Export Control Act or section 306(a)(1) and 307 of the Chemical and Biological Weapons Control and Warfare Elimination Act of 1991 (22 U.S.C. 5604(a)(1), 5605); or

(E) has not made significant progress toward meeting the requirements of the missile technology control regime and raised by the United States embassy in such country.

(2) CERTIFICATIONS PRIOR TO ELIGIBILITY.—Assistance may not be provided under this chapter to a country unless the President certifies to the appropriate congressional committees that elections held in that country are free and fair and are free of substantial criticism by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and other appropriate international organizations.

(b) EXCEPTIONS TO INELIGIBILITY.—

(1) CONGRESSIONAL CERTIFICATION.— Assistance may not be provided under this chapter to a country unless the President certifies to the appropriate congressional committees that elections held in that country are free and fair and are free of substantial criticism by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and other appropriate international organizations.

(2) EXCEPTIONS.—Assistance prohibited by subsection (a) or any similar provision of law, other than assistance prohibited by the provisions referred to in subparagraphs (B) and (D) of subsection (a)(1), may be furnished under any of the following circumstances:

(A) The President determines that furnishing such assistance is important to the national interest of the United States.

(B) The President determines that furnishing such assistance will foster respect for internationally recognized human rights and the rule of law or the development of institutions of democratic governance.

(C) The assistance is furnished for the alleviation of suffering resulting from a natural or man-made disaster.

(D) The assistance is provided under the secondary school exchange program administered by the United States Information Agency.

(2) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—The President shall immediately report to Congress any determination under paragraph (1)(A) or (B) or any decision to provide assistance under paragraph (1)(C).

“SEC. 499F. ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITIES.

“(a) ASSISTANCE THROUGH GOVERNMENTS AND NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS.—Assistance under this chapter may be provided to governments or through nongovernmental organizations.

(b) USE OF ECONOMIC SUPPORT FUNDS.—Except as otherwise provided, any funds that have been allocated under chapter 4 of part II for assistance to the former Soviet Union may be used in accordance with the provisions of this chapter.

“SEC. 499G. DEFINITIONS.

“(a) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.—The term ‘appropriate congressional committees’ means the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate and the Committee on International Relations of the House of Representatives.

“(b) COUNTRIES OF THE SOUTH CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA.—The term ‘countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia’ means Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.’’.

“SEC. 6. ANNUAL REPORT.

Section 104 of the FREEDOM Support Act (22 U.S.C. 5814) is amended—

(1) by striking ‘‘and’’ at the end of paragraph (3);

(2) by striking the period at the end of paragraph (4) and inserting ‘‘; and’’; and

(3) by adding the following new paragraph:

‘‘(5) with respect to the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia—

(A) identifies the progress of United States foreign policy to accomplish the policy identified in section 3 of the Silk Road Strategy Act of 1999;

(B) evaluates the degree to which the assistance authorized by section 12 of part I of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 has been able to accomplish the purposes identified in that chapter; and

(C) recommending any additional initiatives that should be undertaken by the United States to implement the policy and purposes contained in the Silk Road Strategy Act of 1999.’’.

“SEC. 7. UNITED STATES-ISRAEL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA.

It is the sense of the Congress that the United States should continue to provide assistance to the Centre for International Cooperation (MASHAV) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel under the Cooperative Development Program/ Central Asian Republics (CDP/CAR) program of the United States Agency for International Development, for economic development activities in agriculture, health, and other relevant sectors, that are consistent with the priorities of the Agency for International Development in the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia.

“SEC. 8. CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.

Section 102(a) of the FREEDOM Support Act (Public Law 102-511) is amended in paragraphs (2) and (4) by striking each place it appears ‘‘this Act’’ and inserting ‘‘this Act and the Silk Road Strategy Act of 1999’’.

“SEC. 9. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act—

(1) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.—The term ‘appropriate congressional committees’ means the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate and the Committee on International Relations of the House of Representatives.

(2) COUNTRIES OF THE SOUTH CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA.—The term ‘countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia’ means Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. BEREUTER) and the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. HOEFFEL) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. BEREUTER).

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 1152, as amended.

We should remember, however, that 15 countries emerged or reemerged from the collapse of the Soviet Union. A few, the Baltics and Ukraine, garnered special attention in the Freedom Support Act, or in the SEED Act, which addressed Eastern Europe. But the Caucasian and Central Asia region received scant attention.

The area includes some 75 million people in the Nations of Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Mr. Speaker, two points are clear as we look at the situation in these eight countries. First, there is much at stake for our national security. The Caucasus and Central Asia region is strategically located at the geographic nexus of Russia, China, Iran, Afghanistan and Turkey. At least six are secular Islamic states that largely have
This body can and must continue legislative initiatives in this area. This Member's proposed legislation, H.R. 1152, the Silk Road Strategy Act of 1999, is an essential tool in building toward U.S. goals in the region. Broadly, this bill targets U.S. assistance to support the economic and political independence and cross-border cooperation of the Central Asian and Transcaucasian states. This puts the U.S. squarely behind efforts to, first, build democracy and cross-border cooperation as well as resolve regional conflicts; second, to build market-oriented economies and legal systems as well as the infrastructure to facilitate strong East-West commerce and other relations; and, third, to promote U.S. businesses and investments in the region.

Sustained, affordable engagement that matches U.S. ambitions with resources is indispensable to the Caspian region's evolution in a manner compatible with the Free World order and interests. H.R. 1152 is an essential tool in helping to ensure that the region's political and economic options are clear and exploitable, and that the far-reaching changes under way in the nations there will turn out to be desirable ones.

Mr. Speaker, this Member urges his colleagues to vote in favor of H.R. 1152, the Silk Road Strategy Act of 1999.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1152, the Silk Road Strategy Act. I would like to start by commending the distinguished gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. BERRETER) for his leadership on this bill. He is the prime sponsor. He is the distinguished chair of the Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific, and has provided great leadership on this.

Mr. Speaker, I also commend as well a bipartisan group of cosponsors from the committee, including the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS), the gentleman from California (Mr. BERMAN), the gentleman from New York (Mr. ACKERMAN), and the gentleman from New York (Mr. KING).

Mr. Speaker, the five countries of Central Asia and the three countries of the South Caucasus are an important part of the newly independent States. This bill recognizes the unique interests that the United States has in these countries.

We have a strategic interest in seeing that the region does not become a hotbed of armed conflict, terrorism and drug trafficking, and we have some reason to worry. Many of these countries have difficult neighbors, including former Soviet states.

The region is also rife with not only the seeds of ethnic and political conflict, but as we have seen in Nagorno-Karabagh, with actual conflicts that have claimed tens of thousands of lives and have created hundreds of thousands of refugees. We have legitimate and important economic interests in Central Asia and the Caucasus. All eight of these countries have a lot to offer in terms of natural and human resources. There is great potential for trade and investment and a positive exchange of people and ideas.

We have a great political interest in Central Asia and the South Caucasus. These countries are still emerging from Soviet rule, and it is in our interest to help them in the difficult transition away from their communist past. Unfortunately, many of the governments of the region have a long way to go regarding democratization. It is our desire to engage these countries economically and to promote our own interests, but we must not neglect the democratization that must occur there. We need to keep democratic values and human rights at the top of the agenda in the bilateral meetings with leaders of all eight of these countries and need to reach out further to those within these countries that are working to develop a civil society, including independent media, the people in the non-governmental sector and in private business.

It is imperative that we make sure that democratization becomes and remains a priority of ours in this region. Mr. Speaker, I also welcome the inclusive nature of the bill. We recognize the fact that these countries are interconnected, there is economic integration that is needed in this region, and that includes all of the countries of this region. We will not see a full potential for this region without the full participation of all eight of these countries.

It is our hope that these countries understand the incentive of cooperation and make a renewed effort to solve the conflicts that have stood in the way of a greater integration.

Similarly, because we are endorsing integration within the region, this should not be seen as an endorsement of excluding others outside of the region. To tap the resources of South Asia and the Caucasus to settle these conflicts, we will need to work with others outside of the immediate region such as Russia, Ukraine and Turkey, in order to have the fullest possible success.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to note the administration is already pursuing many of these policy issues called for in this bill. It is also providing the kind of assistance authorized by this bill.

I must also note that the administration has expressed strong reservations about two amendments attached during the committee markup. The administration is concerned that these provisions which condition assistance on certification of free and fair elections
and the resolution of business disputes may actually hinder progress on achieving that goal, which and go that we all share. If these issues are not resolved during the conference, it may jeopardize administration support for the final version of this bill.

Mr. Speaker, it is my view and our view that this bill is helpful; that it focuses attention on the region, makes a call for a renewed push on solving regional conflicts promoting regional integration and democratization. I urge all of the Members of the House to support this bill, H.R. 1152.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I first want to thank the distinguished gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. Hoeffel), a first-term member of the Committee on International Relations, who is making a major contribution there, for his kind remarks and for his support. I recall well how the gentleman came up to me after the markup and pointed out something that we mutually agreed was a problem, and we have a way outlined to resolve it and I think to meet the administration’s satisfaction. It was one of those things that we recognized, but at the moment we could not do anything about. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman for his perceptiveness in that respect.

Mr. Speaker, at this point I submit for the RECORD a statement in support of the legislation from the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN), the chairman of the committee.

Mr. Speaker, the gentleman indicates, for example, that he believes this legislation will serve as a signal to the peoples of those countries of America’s desire to ensure that their future will be one of democracy, prosperity, peace and security.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the bill before us today, H.R. 1152, the “Silk Road Strategy Act of 1999,” sponsored by my colleagues from Nebraska, Congressman BERETZER—

The Subcommittee on the International Relations Committee chaired by Congressman BERETZER—the Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific—has jurisdiction over the countries of Central Asia, but the countries of the Caucasus region also covered by this bill—deserve to be a specific focus of our policy and assistance in the region of the former Soviet Union as well.

This bill, which relates to all eight countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus, attempts to ensure the implementation of that specific focus.

While it creates a new Chapter 12 of the Foreign Assistance Act to provide that focus, however, it cites, with regard to those countries, the on-going authority of Chapter 11 of that Act—known as the “FREEDOM Support Act of 1992.”

I think that it is very important, given the key work done by the office of the State Department Coordinator of Assistance created by the 1992 “FREEDOM Support Act.”

Nothing in this legislation would or will endanger that important coordinating function for all of the New Independent States of the former Soviet Union.

The bill simply ensures that an added, specific focus on the states of Central Asia and the Caucasus.

Mr. Speaker, I support passage of this measure, which should serve as a signal of America’s interest in the future of the eight newly independent states in the regions of Central Asia and the Caucasus. It should serve as well as a signal to the peoples of those countries of America’s desire to ensure that their future will be one of democracy, prosperity, peace and security.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join in supporting the passage of this measure.

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the distinguished gentleman from California (Mr. RADANOVICH) for the purposes of a colloquy. And I would say as we begin this that the gentleman has been very much interested and concerned about this legislation and supported it to come to the committee hearings and participated in those hearings. Mr. Speaker, this distinguished gentleman from California is a new member of the committee.

Mr. RADANOVICH. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. BEREUTER) for his leadership in bringing this bill to the floor. I share the gentleman’s vision in promoting greater regional cooperation, supporting increased economic integration, and facilitating the free flow of transportation and communication among the States of the Caucasus and Central Asia.

While I support these goals, I along with many of my colleagues, remain concerned with legislation that may, at a subsequent step in the legislative process, become a vehicle for the weakening or the repeal of Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act.

Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that this bill is being brought forth today with the clear understanding that Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act will remain in place and unchanged throughout the remaining legislative process.

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, reiterating my theme, I will be happy to respond to the gentleman’s statement. I am pleased that the gentleman has joined the Committee on International Relations this year, and as my colleague knows, this Member, the author of the legislation, has made it a point to ensure that the Silk Road Strategy Act intentionally did not include any change in Section 907. Neither the Senate version of the Silk Road legislation which was advanced after amendment, repeals or otherwise revises Section 907. So there would be no basis in a conference, with the approval of this legislation we pass in the House today, for Section 907 to be repealed or altered. Therefore, I think the gentleman’s concerns are fully addressed.

Mr. Speaker, at this point I submit for the RECORD a statement in support of this legislation and commend the gentleman from Nebraska for his strategy with this bill and attention to current events in Caucasus region. Since 1923, Armenia and Azerbaijan have been in conflict over Nagorno-Karabagh. In the beginning of this year, Armenia and Nagorno-Karabagh accepted a compromise peace proposal developed by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Azerbaijan rejected it outright. This legislation would allow for a new step in the diplomatic process by encouraging all parties towards a lasting peace. While I support these goals, I along with many of my colleagues, remain concerned with legislation that may, at a subsequent step in the legislative process, become a vehicle for the weakening or the repeal of Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act.

Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that this bill is being brought forth today with the clear understanding that Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act will remain in place and unchanged throughout the remaining legislative process.

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, reiterating my theme, I will be happy to respond to the gentleman’s statement. I am pleased that the gentleman has joined the Committee on International Relations this year, and as my colleague knows, this Member, the author of the legislation, has made it a point to ensure that the Silk Road Strategy Act intentionally did not include any change in Section 907. Neither the Senate version of the Silk Road legislation which was advanced after amendment, repeals or otherwise revises Section 907. So there would be no basis in a conference, with the approval of this legislation we pass in the House today, for Section 907 to be repealed or altered. Therefore, I think the gentleman’s concerns are fully addressed.

Mr. Speaker, at this point I submit for the RECORD a statement in support of this legislation and commend the gentleman from Nebraska for his strategy with this bill and attention to current events in Caucasus region. Since 1923, Armenia and Azerbaijan have been in conflict over Nagorno-Karabagh. Any attempt to repeal or waive Section 907 legitimates Azerbaijan’s blockade and rewards its rejection of the current OSCE compromise plan. Further, such a waiver would seriously jeopardize any chance for peace in the near future.

While I share a commitment to greater regional cooperation and economic integration in the Caucasus and Central Asia, I am very concerned that this legislation could become a vehicle for the weakening or repeal of Section 907. I would strongly oppose such action and urge the House to consider Nagorno-Karabagh.” Any attempt to repeal or waive Section 907 legitimates Azerbaijan’s blockade and rewards its rejection of the current OSCE compromise plan. Further, such a waiver would seriously jeopardize any chance for peace in the near future.

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Uzbekistan and the Southern Caucasus republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I find that calls on the United States to give greater attention to the important countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus. We have significant national concerns in this region related to our national security and our international economic interests. These countries were part of the former Soviet Union, and we have a great interest in fostering democracy, an open market economy, and respect for human rights there. Many of these countries are resource-rich, and we likewise have a strong interest in assuring that oil, gas, and other natural resources are developed and are available on the world markets through free and fair international trade.

We have a strategic interest in seeing that these areas do not become hotbeds of armed conflict, terrorism or drug trafficking. These countries are located in a difficult neighborhood—the adjacent countries include Iran, Afghanistan, and China. In this area are a number of serious ethnic conflicts and unresolved political differences which could lead to bloodshed and instability. We need only remember, Mr. Speaker, that in this region we have already seen serious strife in Nagorno-Karabakh and Abkhazia, which have resulted in the loss of tens of thousands of lives and the creation of hundreds of thousands of refugees.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 1152 authorizes and urges that we provide humanitarian assistance, as well as help for economic development and the development of democratic institutions. These countries are already eligible for other forms of U.S. assistance, but we can and should be doing more. I would also note, Mr. Speaker, that the Administration is currently pursuing many of the policy lines that are called for in this bill, and I commend the Administration for its efforts in this regard. I support this legislation because it helps to focus our attention on this important region and urges our government to make a greater effort to help solve regional conflicts, promote regional economic development, and further the development of democracy.

Mr. Speaker, I want to express my support for an amendment adopted during the markup of this legislation in the International Relations Committee. American companies and firms from other OECD nations have made substantial direct investments in "Silk Road" countries, but they are not being accorded fair treatment. In some cases investment contracts are not being honored, export permits are not being issued, and de facto rationalizations of foreign investment have taken place. In several instances, formal complaints have been lodged by investors through embassies of the United States and other countries.

In order to discourage this kind of mistreatment, the International Relations Committee amended the legislation to include language conditioning new assistance on the fair and equal treatment of foreign investors. Specifically, the amendment requires recipient governments to demonstrate "significant progress" in resolving investment and other trade disputes that have been registered with the U.S. Embassy and raised by the U.S. Embassy with the host government.

I cosponsored this amendment in Committee and I support its inclusion in the bill. Mr. Speaker, because without it the Silk Road Strategy Act could lead countries in this region to conclude they have a green light to renege on commitments to foreign investors, jeopardizing hundreds of millions of dollars of foreign investments. The inclusion of this amendment should send a strong signal that countries cannot expect to receive American assistance if they misinterpret the companies that provide critical investment capital and employment opportunities for their own citizens.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1152, the Silk Road Act of 1999.

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

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, I urge again support of the legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. BEREUTER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1152, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds) agreed to.

The Clerk reads as follows:

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

SEC. 1. SHORT TITLE. This Act may be cited as the ''Certified Development Company Program Improvements Act of 1999.''

SEC. 2. WOMEN-OWNED BUSINESSES.

Section 501(d)(3)(C) of the Small Business Investment Act (15 U.S.C. 695d(3)(C)) is amended by inserting before the comma "or" women-owned business development'.

SEC. 3. MAXIMUM DEBENUTURE SIZE.

Section 562(2) of the Small Business Investment Act of 1958 (15 U.S.C. 666d(3)(C)) is amended to read as follows:

"(2) Loans made by the Administration under this section shall be limited to $1,000,000 for each such identifiable small business concern, except loans meeting the criteria specified in section 501(d)(3), which shall be limited to $1,300,000 for each such identifiable small business concern.''

SEC. 4. FEES.

Section 503(f) of the Small Business Investment Act of 1958 (15 U.S.C. 667f) is amended to read as follows:

"(f) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The fees authorized by subsections (b) and (d) shall apply to financings approved by the Administration prior or on or after October 1, 1996, but shall not apply to financings approved by the Administration prior to that date."