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

There was no objection.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 500

Whereas people around the world supported the Republic of Zimbabwe's quest for independence, democracy, and the protection of human rights and the rule of law;

Whereas, at the time of independence in 1980, showed bright prospects for democracy, economic development, and racial reconciliation;

Whereas the people of Zimbabwe are now suffering the destabilizing effects of a serious government-sanctioned breakdown in the rule of law, which is critical to economic development as well as domestic tranquility;

Whereas a free and fair national referendum was held in Zimbabwe in February 2000 in which voters rejected proposed constitutional amendments to increase the president's authority to expropriate land without payment;

Whereas the President of Zimbabwe has defied two high court decisions declaring land seizures to be illegal;

Whereas previous land reform efforts have been ineffective largely due to corrupt practices and inefficiencies within the Government of Zimbabwe;

Whereas recent violence in Zimbabwe has resulted in several murders and brutal attacks on innocent individuals, including the murder of farm workers and farmers;

Whereas violence has been directed toward individuals of all races;

Whereas the ruling party and its supporters have directed violence against democratic reform activists seeking to prepare for upcoming parliamentary elections;

Whereas the offices of a leading independent newspaper in Zimbabwe have been bombed;

Whereas the Government of Zimbabwe has not yet publicly condemned the recent violence;

Whereas President Mugabe's statement that thousands of law-abiding citizens are enemies of the state has further incited violence;

Whereas 147 out of 150 members of the Parliament in Zimbabwe (98 percent) belong to the same political party;

Whereas no date has been set for parliamentary elections;

Whereas the unemployment rate in Zimbabwe now exceeds 60 percent and political turmoil is on the brink of destroying Zimbabwe's economy;

Whereas the economy is being further damaged by the Government of Zimbabwe's ongoing involvement in the war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo;

Whereas the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization has issued a warning that Zimbabwe faces a food emergency due to shortages caused by violence against farmers and farm workers; and

Whereas events in Zimbabwe could threaten stability and economic development in the entire region: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) extends its support to the vast majority of citizens of the Republic of Zimbabwe who are committed to peace, economic prosperity, and an open, transparent parliamentary election process;

(2) strongly urges the Government of Zimbabwe to enforce the rule of law and fulfill its responsibility to protect the political and civil rights of citizens;

(3) supports those international efforts to assist with land reform which are consistent with accepted principles of international law and which take place after the holding of free and fair parliamentary elections;

(4) condemns government-directed violence against farm workers, farmers, and opposition party members;

(5) encourages the local media, civil society, and all political parties to work toward a campaign environment conducive to free, fair and transparent elections within the legally prescribed period;

(6) recommends international support for voter education, domestic election monitoring, and violence monitoring activities;

(7) urges the United States to continue to monitor violence and condemn brutality against law-abiding citizens;

(8) congratulates all the democratic reform activists in Zimbabwe for their resolve to bring about political change peacefully, even in the face of violence and intimidation;

(9) recommends that the United States send a bipartisan delegation under the auspices of the International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute to observe the parliamentary election process in Zimbabwe; and

(10) desires a lasting, warm, and mutually beneficial relationship between the United States and a democratic, peaceful Zimbabwe.

The resolution was agreed to.

AMENDMENT TO PREAMBLE OFFERED BY MR. GILMAN

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I offer an amendment to the preamble.

The Clerk read as follows:

Amendment to the preamble offered by Mr. GILMAN.

In the 14th clause of the preamble, strike "no date has been set" and insert "June 24 and June 25, 2000, are the dates".

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I have no comment on the amendment.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, we do not object.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members of the House agree to the amendment.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I have no objection to the request of the gentleman from New York.

The amendment to the preamble was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on House Resolution 500.

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

There was no objection.

SENSE OF HOUSE REGARDING INDEPENDENT MEDIA IN RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on International Relations be discharged from further consideration of the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 352) expressing the sense of the Congress regarding the mass media and intimidation of the independent press in the Russian Federation, expressing support for freedom of speech and the independent media in the Russian Federation, and calling on the President of the United States to express his strong concern for freedom of speech and the independent media in the Russian Federation, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the concurrent resolution.

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

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members of the House agree to the amendment.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I have no objection to the request of the gentleman from New York.

The amendment to the preamble was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) extends its support to the vast majority of citizens of the Republic of Zimbabwe who are committed to peace, economic prosperity, and an open, transparent parliamentary election process;

(2) strongly urges the Government of Zimbabwe to enforce the rule of law and fulfill its responsibility to protect the political and civil rights of citizens;
knows because he was host to the number two person at Media Most. As the distinguished chairman knows, just several weeks ago, he had to send the number two person from Media Most over speaking to Members of Congress expressing the real concerns of what happened with the FSB invasion of their headquarters and the outrage that many of us felt about having this independent media feel the pressure of what appears to be the Putin government, in trying to crack down on the ability of Russians to speak out.

Russia is a fragile democracy, and that fragile democracy is going to exist and succeed only based upon the success of their free media, and we must in America speak out when we see incidences occur like the incident involving the reporter who was responding or fact-finding on the basis of the efforts by Gusinsky to report on concerns within Russia about the direction of the Russian government. And while President Putin and leaders in the various factions may not agree with what is being said by the Russian media, they must understand that a free democracy must have that free speech, or it will cease to be a free democracy.

I might also add that we are heartened that Mr. Gusinsky has recently been released, but I also want to mention that there are other patterns of strong-arm tactics coming out of Russia, Mr. Speaker. On April 3, one of our Pennsylvania constituents, a Penn State professor by the name of Ed Pope, was arrested. He has been charged with crimes against the Russian state. It is an absolute fabrication.

My good friend and colleague, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. Peterson), and I have been working this case for about a week and we are going to step back until we see Mr. Pope released to his wife and to his loved ones up in State College.

Mr. Speaker, that all of us on both sides of the aisle want to be friends with Russia. We want Russia to be an equal trading partner of ours. We want a secure stable relationship. We want to have a fair process where the two countries can work together in every possible area of cooperation. But none of this can exist if there is a pattern of abuse of the free media and if there is a fear of intimidation on the part of those people who would go to Russia to conduct business or to perform positive relations with the people of Russia.

So, again, I want to thank my colleagues for this outstanding resolution. The gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN) is working tirelessly to ensure that the Committee on International Relations and the Committee on Security and Intelligence are able to be aware of these kinds of issues around the world. The gentleman from Florida (Mr. HASTINGS) is constantly on top of these issues. I applaud both of them for their leadership and join with them in urging our colleagues to pass this important legislation this evening.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida, Mr. Speaker, continuing my resolution of objection, I yield to the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN).

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON) for his supporting remarks.

Mr. Speaker, House Concurrent Resolution 352, which I have introduced along with the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH), makes it clear that the Congress is greatly concerned by the treatment of the Russian media by President Vladimir Putin and by his government’s increasingly apparent lack of respect for freedom of expression in Russia.

After years of extensive privatization of Russian state-owned enterprises, little privatization has been carried out in major segments of the Russian media. Importantly, such as large printing and publishing houses and nationwide television frequencies and broadcasting facilities, have been only partially privatized, if they have been privatized at all.

That failure to privatize key segments of the media presents a tempting opportunity for Russian officials to manipulate the state-run media for their own ends; and in the recent parliamentary and presidential elections, we saw clear evidence that Russian officials have succumbed to that temptation. As this resolution points out, the Russian government’s immense influence over the state-run media was used during those elections to openly support candidates in the Kremlin and to attack, blatantly and viciously, those who oppose that party of power.

Mr. Putin probably would not be president of Russia today if such media manipulation had not been used to his own advantage. Mr. Speaker, in addition to that manipulation of the state-run media, this resolution points out that the Russian government and its officials and agencies have also sought to intimidate the independent media.

A new Russian Ministry for the Press was created last July, and the Minister for the Press stated quite openly that his job was to address the so-called “aggression” of the Russian press. Leading Russian editors complaining in an open letter to former President Boris Yeltsin in August that government officials were putting pressure on the media, particularly through unwarranted raids by the tax police.

In fact, as recently as May 11, Russian officials of the Russian Federal Security Service raided the headquarters of Media-Most, that is the company which operates NTV, the largest independent national television station in Russia. Then, just last week, the owner of Media-Most, Vladimir Gusinsky, was arrested on vague charges and held for several days.

In addition, Russian reporters have been beaten, some murdered, and police investigations have tended to fail to identify the perpetrators, much less bring them to justice. Andrei Babinsky, a Russian reporter working for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty covering the war in Chechnya, was arrested by the Russian military and then exchanged to unidentified Chechens for POWs. Another reporter was ordered by police to enter a psychiatric clinic for an examination after he wrote articles critical of certain Russian officials.

Mr. Speaker, beyond these examples of the ongoing intimidation of the press by Mr. Putin’s government, this resolution points out a distressing fact that is very relevant to freedom of expression in general in Russia. The Russian Federal Security Service is now monitoring and controlling surveillance over the Internet in Russia by installing a system by which all transmissions and e-mails originating within Russia and sent to parties in Russia can be read by its personnel. In this manner, new structures of surveillance over all of Russia’s citizens are now being created.

This resolution, H. Con. Res. 352, makes it clear that the Russian government’s manipulation and intimidation of the media threatens the chances for democracy and the rule of law in Russia and makes it clear that freedom of expression by Russians in general is also under attack by that government and its agencies.

Mr. Speaker, this measure calls on our President to make it clear to President Putin that the United States insists on respect for freedom of speech and of the press in Russia.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida, Mr. Speaker, continuing my reservation, I would like to make a few additional points, one being that under President Putin it seems that conditions are getting worse. But, more important, I would like to thank the chairman of the Committee on International Relations for expediting this matter and for all of our colleagues that are cosponsors. None are more significant than the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS), who, along with the chairman, is the author of some of the language that appears in the resolution.

Having that understanding, I would like to reflect on two things. Had he been here and not had the scheduling mix-up that he has, the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) no doubt would have pointed out that under former President Yeltsin, the media enjoyed a reasonable degree of independence and freedom from supervision by the so-called Media Ministry. The gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS), myself and the gentleman from
New York (Chairman GILMAN) has expressed our concerns that these actions will exacerbate tension in the Russian media and Russian society vis-à-vis the government.

Finally, the government of Russia has a right to enforce its laws and investigate illegal activity of its citizens. However, such a selective application of the Russian government’s prosecutorial authority, imprisonment before the actual charges are brought and the overall abuse of the Federal authority, does deserve Congressional condemnation.

For the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) and for the gentleman from New York (Chairman GILMAN), I offer my thanks.

Mr. Chairman, I withdraw my reservation of objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. Ose). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

The Clerk reads the concurrent resolution, as follows:

H. CON. RES. 332

Whereas almost all of the large printing plants, publishing houses, and newspaper distribution companies, several leading news agencies, and almost all of the nationwide television frequencies and broadcasting facilities in the Russian Federation remain under government control, despite the extensive privatization of state-owned enterprises in other sectors of the Russian economy;

Whereas the “Press Freedom Survey 2000” reported by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, of Washington, DC, that the approximately 2,500 regional and rural newspapers in Russia outside of Moscow are almost completely owned by local or provincial governments;

Whereas the Government of Russia is able to suspend or revoke broadcast and publishing licenses and apply exorbitant taxes and fees on the independent media;

Whereas, in 1999, a major television network controlled by the Russian Government canceled the program “Top Secret” after it reported Russian corruption at high levels of the government;

Whereas, in July 1999, the Government of Russia created a new Ministry for Press, Television and Radio Broadcasting, and Mass Communications;

Whereas, in August 1999, the editors of fourteen of Russia’s leading news publications sent an open letter to then Russian President Boris Yeltsin stating that high-ranking officials of the government were putting pressure on the mass media, particularly through unwarranted raids by tax police;

Whereas Mikhail Lesin, Minister for Press, Television and Radio Broadcasting, and Mass Communications, stated in October 1999 that the Russian Government would change its policies towards the mass media so as to address “aggression” by the Russian press;

Whereas the Russian Federal Security Service or “FSB” is reportedly implementing a technical regulation known as “SORM-2” by which it could reroute, in real time, all electronic communications, surveillance, a likely violation of the Russian constitution’s provisions concerning the right to private communications; according to Aleksei Simonov, President of the Russian “Glavnost Defense Foundation”, a nongovernmental human rights organization;

Whereas such surveillance under SORM-2 would allow the Russian Federal Security Service access to passwords, financial transactions, and confidential company information, a weapon against journalists and others;

Whereas it is reported that over one hundred Russian journalists have been killed over the past decade, with few if any of the government investigations into those murders resulting in arrests, prosecutions, or convictions;

Whereas numerous observers of Russian politics have noted the blatant misuse of the leading Russian television channels, controlled by the Russian Government, to undermine popular support for political rivals of those supporting the government in the run-up to parliamentary elections held in December 1999;

Whereas it has been reported that Russian television stations controlled by the Russian Government were used to disparage opponents of Vladimir Putin during the campaign for the presidency in the spring of this year, and whereas it has been reported that political advertisements by those candidates were routinely rejected by those stations to slots outside of prime time coverage;

Whereas manipulation of the media by the Russian Government appeared intent on portraying the Russian military attack on the separatist Republic of Chechnya as the maximum political advantage of the Russian Government;

Whereas in December 1999 two correspondents for “Reuters News Agency” and the “Associated Press” were reportedly accused of being foreign spies after reporting high Russian casualty figures in the war in Chechnya;

Whereas the arrest in January 2000, subsequent treatment by the Russian military, and prosecution by the Russian Government of Andrei Babitsky, a correspondent for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty covering the war in Chechnya, have constituted a violation of commitments made by the Russian Government for the press and have reportedly contributed to the violation of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation;

Whereas in January 2000 Aleksandr Khimshtein, a reporter for the newspaper “Moskovsky Komsomol’est”, was ordered by the Russian Federal Security Service to enter a clinic after 100 miles from his home for a psychiatric examination after he accused top Russian officials of illegal activities, and such detainment in psychiatric wards was previously employed by the former Soviet regime to stifle dissent;

Whereas the Russian newspaper “Novaya Gazeta” was officially warned by the Russian Ministry of the Press for its printing of an interview with Asian Mashkovd, the elected President of the Republic of Chechnya; an entire issue of “Novaya Gazeta”, including several articles alleging massive campaign finance violations by the presidential candidate of Vladimir Putin, was lost to unidentified computer “hackers”; and a journalist for “Novaya Gazeta” was savagely beaten in May of this year;

Whereas President Thomas Dine of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, on March 11th, expressed deep concern over the reported expanding efforts to intimidate the mass media, stating that those actions threaten the chances for democracy and rule of law in Russia;

Whereas “NTV”, the only national independent television station, which reaches half of Russia and is credited with professional broadcast news programs, has frequently broadcast news stories critical of Russian Government policies;

Whereas on May 11, 2000, masked officers of the Russian Federal Security Service carried out a raid on “Media-Most”, the corporate owner of NTV and other independent media, and a raid on “Media-Most” was carried out by the authorities of President Putin and Russian Government ministers who have not criticized or repudiated that action;

Whereas the May 11th raid on NTV was made after the arrests of the owners of NTV and other independent media, which had been known of the planned arrest of Vladimir Gusinsky, owner of NTV and other leading independent media was suddenly arrested;

Whereas President Putin claimed not to have known of the planned arrest of Vladimir Gusinsky;

Whereas the continued functioning of an independent media is a vital attribute of Russian democracy and an important obstacle to the return of authoritarian or totalitarian policies and practices;

Whereas a free news media can exist only in an environment that is free of state control of the news media, that is free of any form of state censorship or official coercion of any kind, and that is protected and guaranteed by the rule of law; Now, therefore, be it

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

(1) expresses its continuing, strong support for freedom of speech and the independent media in the Russian Federation;

(2) expresses its strong concern over the failure of the government of the Russian Federation to privatize major segments of the Russian media, thus retaining the ability of Russian officials to manipulate the media for political or corrupt ends;

(3) expresses its strong concern over the pervasive control of the news media in the Russian Federation; and the Russian media that has now become apparent;

(4) expresses its strong concern over the pattern of manipulation of the Russian media by Russian Government officials for political and possibly corrupt purposes that has now become apparent;

(5) expresses profound regret and dismay at the detention and continued prosecution of Andrei Babitsky and condemns those breaches of Russian legal procedure and of Russian Government commitments to the rights of Russian citizens that have reported-ly occurred in his detention and prosecution;

(6) expresses strong concern over the breaches of Russian legal procedure that have reported-ly occurred in the course of the May 11th raid by the Russian Federal Security Service on Media-Most and the June 12th arrest of Vladimir Gusinsky; and a journalist for “Novaya Gazeta” was savagely beaten in May of this year;

(7) calls on the President of the United States to express to the President of the Russian Federation his strong concern for the protection of human rights and freedoms in the Russian Federation and to emphasize the concern of the United States that official pressures against the independent and critical media by the state-owned media in Russia are incompatible with democratic norms.
I know firsthand why we seek this kind of remedy. We are experiencing some 1,700 layoffs within my district. What we know for certain is that there is often a lack of coordination. It is this kind of coordinated effort that this piece of legislation seeks to remedy.

In short, when there is a natural disaster, FEMA comes in and provides an opportunity to make sure that it integrates with all the Federal agencies, the kind of emergency response that is needed when communities are experiencing a natural disaster. It is true when there have been base closures in the past that the Department of Defense comes in and also organizes all the Federal agencies that are impacted, and in this way presenting a coordinated effort in assisting the communities through these problematic concerns.

That is not the case currently when layoffs occur, when workers are displaced. So, what this bill seeks through the Department of Commerce is to create in the Economic Development Administration a coordinating entity that will work with our various agencies, that will work with the Department of Agriculture, Small Business Administration, the Treasury, Labor, HUD, and, of course, the Department of Commerce itself.

The purpose here is to appoint a team leader. Again, when communities are experiencing these kinds of layoffs, currently the communities involved have to reach out to the various Federal agencies. What this will do when a community experiences the economic distress that I have talked about is it will provide the Department of Commerce with the opportunities to come in and coordinate this assistance, so it will be both cost savings, efficient and effective and assist our communities and assist those who are being displaced, those who have been laid off, with getting the kind of immediate coordinated assistance that they expect from the Federal Government.

I want to thank as well the administration, especially the Department of Commerce, for working with us on this approach. We hope to pilot this approach by getting them up to Connecticut and having them work through some of these particularly thorny areas so that we can coordinate in a whole-hearted effort to make sure that workers are receiving the kind of relief that they have.

Mr. Speaker we are seeking original cosponsors on this bill that we are going to drop tomorrow evening. As I have indicated, we have more than 160 cosponsors to what is a very pragmatic, straightforward solution in addressing communities that experience economic distress.