

H. Res. 135

In the House of Representatives, U.S.,

March 14, 2005.

Resolved,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This resolution may be cited as the “House Democracy Assistance Commission Resolution”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

The House of Representatives makes the following findings:

(1) Since its founding, the United States has championed the expansion of democracy around the world.

(2) Indeed, beginning with the Continental Congress and continuing through the modern Congress, representative institutions have served as a critical component through which the American people have expressed their views on policy issues and through which the power of other government branches has been balanced.

(3) In his second inaugural address on January 20, 2005, President George W. Bush declared: “We are led by events and common sense to one conclusion: The sur-

vival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands. The best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world. . . . So it is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world.”.

(4) Strong institutions, particularly national legislatures with proper infrastructure, are essential for democracies to mature and to withstand cyclical turnover in governments.

(5) Furthermore, the parliaments of emerging democracies are commonly comprised of new legislators, citizens from many walks of life, who face the challenges of creating new democratic systems without the benefit of previous legislative experience. The legislatures of these fledgling democracies often lack training, equipment, or resources to carry out their work effectively.

(6) Many parliaments do not possess the necessary technology, such as modern computer equipment, software, or access to databases and electronic resources, to facilitate the timely flow of legislative information to lawmakers and legislative staff.

(7) Parliaments in fledgling democracies also frequently lack trained staff to provide nonpartisan policy

information, to draft legislation, and to advise legislators on policy matters.

(8) Newly democratic parliaments may lack the resources to establish internal libraries, reference materials, and archiving capabilities for use by legislators and staff.

(9) From 1990 through 1996, the United States House of Representatives, in conjunction with the House Information Systems Office (later known as House Information Resources) and the Congressional Research Service (CRS) of the Library of Congress, provided equipment and technical assistance to newly democratic parliaments in Central and Eastern European countries, including Albania, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, and Ukraine, in an effort to develop and strengthen those institutions.

(10) This program, commonly known as the “Frost-Solomon Task Force”, not only served the United States foreign policy goal of helping to establish democratic institutions in other countries, but also developed significant goodwill in the countries in which it was implemented. The program was designed to improve the efficiency of parliaments and the professionalism of their

members and staff, as well as to increase transparency and accountability.

(11) A program similar to the Frost-Solomon Task Force would enable Members, officers, and staff of the House of Representatives to share their expertise and experience with their counterparts in other countries, in keeping with the declared policy of the United States to support the growth of democratic institutions, thereby undertaking what President Bush called “the idealistic work of helping raise up free governments”.

SEC. 3. ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMISSION.

There is established in the House of Representatives a commission to be known as the House Democracy Assistance Commission (hereafter in this resolution referred to as the “Commission”).

SEC. 4. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMISSION.

(a) NUMBER AND APPOINTMENT.—The Commission shall be composed of Members of the House of Representatives, the number of whom shall be determined by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, in consultation with the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives. Majority party members shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and minority party members shall be appointed by the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives.

(b) **TERMS OF MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.**—Each member of the Commission shall be appointed for a term that is concurrent with the Congress in which the appointment is made. Such a member may be reappointed for one or more subsequent terms in accordance with the preceding sentence.

(c) **CHAIRPERSON.**—The Chairperson of the Commission shall be designated by the Speaker of the House of Representatives from among the members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives under subsection (a).

SEC. 5. DUTIES OF COMMISSION.

(a) **ACTIVITIES.**—The Commission shall work with the parliaments of selected countries, as determined pursuant to subsection (b)(4), on a frequent and regular basis in order to—

(1) enable Members, officers, and staff of the House of Representatives and congressional support agencies to provide expert advice to members and staff of the parliaments of selected countries;

(2) enable members and staff of parliaments of selected countries to visit the House of Representatives and its support agencies to learn about their operations first-hand; and

(3) provide recommendations to the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development regarding the provision of material assistance, such as modern automation and office systems, information technology, and library supplies, that the Commission determines is needed by the parliament of a selected country in order to improve the efficiency and transparency of its work, and to oversee the provision of such assistance.

(b) STUDY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—In order to carry out the activities described in subsection (a), the Commission shall conduct on an annual basis (or more frequently if necessary) a study on the feasibility of programs of assistance for parliaments of countries described in paragraph (2) for the purpose of strengthening the parliamentary infrastructure of such countries. The Commission shall designate those countries described in paragraph (2) with respect to which a study will be conducted under this subsection. The study shall assess—

(A) the independent and substantive role that each parliament plays, or could reasonably be expected to play, in the legislative process and government oversight;

(B) the potential benefit to each parliament of expert advice from Members and staff of the House of Representatives in areas such as the development of research services and legislative information systems, parliamentary procedure, committee operations, budget process, government oversight, and constituent services; and

(C) the need in each parliament for material assistance, such as modern automation and office systems, information technology, and research materials, in order to improve efficiency and transparency.

(2) COUNTRIES DESCRIBED.—The countries referred to in paragraph (1) are countries that have established or are developing democratic parliaments which would benefit from assistance described in this resolution.

(3) SENSE OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.—It is the sense of the House of Representatives that the countries described in paragraph (2) with respect to which studies will be conducted under this subsection should reflect a geographic diversity and over time should include countries from each of the following regions: Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, the Middle East and Central Asia, and the Western Hemisphere.

(4) **SELECTED COUNTRIES.**—From the countries studied, the Commission shall select one or more parliaments that it recommends should receive assistance under the provisions of this resolution, based on the criteria in paragraph (1). Assistance may be provided under the provisions of this resolution to a parliament selected under this paragraph only if the parliament first expresses to the Speaker of the House of Representatives an interest to receive such assistance.

(c) **REPORT.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than September 30, 2005, and each September 30 thereafter until September 30, 2009, the Commission shall prepare and submit to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives, the Committee on International Relations and other appropriate House committees, the Office of Interparliamentary Affairs of the House of Representatives, and the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, an annual report on the following:

(A) **RESULTS OF STUDY.**—The results of the study conducted pursuant to subsection (b).

(B) **COMMISSION ACTIVITIES.**—In accordance with the results of such study, a review of the activities of the Commission in the previous year and

a proposal for the activities of the Commission in the following year, as described in subsection (a).

(2) **DEFINITION.**—In this subsection, the term “other appropriate House committees” means the Committee on Appropriations, the Committee on House Administration, and the Committee on Rules of the House of Representatives.

SEC. 6. ROLE OF THE COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—The Commission shall carry out the duties described in section 5 using the staff and resources of the Committee on International Relations, including the use of consultants, such as individuals with expertise in development of democratic parliaments, legislative systems management, legislative research, parliamentary procedure, related legislative matters, and technology systems management, as appropriate.

(b) **PARTICIPATION OF LEGISLATIVE BRANCH EMPLOYEES.**—At the request of the Commission, the head of any House office or congressional support agency may assist the work of the Commission by—

(1) detailing personnel of that office to the staff of the Committee on International Relations; or

(2) authorizing personnel of that office to participate in activities of the Commission.

SEC. 7. TERMINATION.

The Commission shall terminate on September 30, 2009.

Attest:

Clerk.