

111TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. RES. 49

To express the sense of the Senate regarding the importance of public
diplomacy.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

FEBRUARY 13, 2009

Mr. LUGAR (for himself, Mr. KERRY, Mr. KAUFMAN, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. FEINGOLD, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. WICKER, Mr. ISAKSON, Mr. CARDIN, and Mrs. SHAHEEN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

MAY 7, 2009

Reported by Mr. KERRY, without amendment

MAY 19, 2009

Considered and agreed to

RESOLUTION

To express the sense of the Senate regarding the importance
of public diplomacy.

Whereas public diplomacy is the conduct of foreign relations
directly with the average citizen of a country, rather than
with officials of a country's foreign ministry;

Whereas public diplomacy is commonly conducted through
people-to-people exchanges in which experts, authors, art-
ists, educators, and students interact with their peers in
other countries;

Whereas effective public diplomacy promotes free and unfiltered access to information about the United States through books, newspapers, periodicals, and the Internet;

Whereas public diplomacy requires a willingness to discuss all aspects of society, search for common values, foster a long-term bilateral relationship based on mutual respect, and recognize that certain areas of disagreement may remain unresolved on a short term basis;

Whereas a BBC World Service poll published in February 2009 that involved 13,000 respondents in 21 countries found that while 40 percent of the respondents had a positive view of the United States, 43 percent had a negative view of the United States;

Whereas Freedom House's 2008 Global Press Freedom report notes that 123 countries (66 percent of the world's countries and 80 percent of the world's population) have a press that is classified as "Not Free" or "Partly Free";

Whereas the Government of the United Kingdom, of France, and of Germany run stand-alone public diplomacy facilities throughout the world, which are known as the British Council, the Alliance Francaise, and the Goethe Institute, respectively;

Whereas these government-run facilities teach the national languages of their respective countries, offer libraries, newspapers, and periodicals, sponsor public lecture and film series that engage local audiences in dialogues that foster better understandings between these countries and create an environment promoting greater trust and openness;

Whereas the United States has historically operated similar facilities, known as American Centers, which—

(1) offered classes in English, extensive libraries housing collections of American literature, history, economics, business, and social studies, and reading rooms offering the latest American newspapers, periodicals, and academic journals;

(2) hosted visiting American speakers and scholars on these topics; and

(3) ran United States film series on topics related to American values;

Whereas in societies in which freedom of speech, freedom of the press, or local investment in education were minimal, American Centers provided vital outposts of information for citizens throughout the world, giving many of them their only exposure to uncensored information about the United States;

Whereas this need for uncensored information about the United States has accelerated as more foreign governments have restricted Internet access or blocked Web sites viewed as hostile to their political regimes;

Whereas following the end of the Cold War and the attacks on United States embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, budgetary and security pressures resulted in the drastic downsizing or closure of most of the American Centers;

Whereas beginning in 1999, American Centers began to be renamed Information Resource Centers and relocated primarily inside United States embassy compounds;

Whereas of the 177 Information Resource Centers operating in February 2009, 87, or 49 percent, operate on a “By Appointment Only” basis and 18, or 11 percent, do not permit any public access;

Whereas Information Resource Centers located outside United States embassy compounds receive significantly more visitors than those inside such compounds, including twice the number of visitors in Africa, 6 times more visitors in the Middle East, and 22 times more visitors in Asia; and

Whereas Iran has increased the number of similar Iranian facilities, known as Iranian Cultural Centers, to about 60 throughout the world: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That—

2 (1) the Secretary of State should initiate a re-
3 examination of the public diplomacy platform strat-
4 egy of the United States with a goal of reestab-
5 lishing publicly accessible American Centers;

6 (2) after taking into account relevant security
7 considerations, the Secretary of State should con-
8 sider placing United States public diplomacy facili-
9 ties at locations conducive to maximizing their use,
10 consistent with the authority given to the Secretary
11 under section 606(a)(2)(B) of the Secure Embassy
12 Construction and Counterterrorism Act of 1999 (22
13 U.S.C. 4865(a)(2)(B)) to waive certain requirements
14 of that Act.

○