

109TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. 135

Providing for the establishment of a commission in the House of Representatives to assist parliaments in emerging democracies.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 3, 2005

Mr. DREIER (for himself, Mr. PRICE of North Carolina, Mr. HYDE, Mr. LANTOS, Mr. KIRK, Mr. BILIRAKIS, and Mr. GILLMOR) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on International Relations

RESOLUTION

Providing for the establishment of a commission in the House of Representatives to assist parliaments in emerging democracies.

1 *Resolved,*

2 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

3 This resolution may be cited as the “House Democ-
4 racy Assistance Commission Resolution”.

5 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

6 The House of Representatives makes the following
7 findings:

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

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

11 (3) In his second inaugural address on January
12 20, 2005, President George W. Bush declared: “We
13 are led by events and common sense to one conclu-
14 sion: The survival of liberty in our land increasingly
15 depends on the success of liberty in other lands. The
16 best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of
17 freedom in all the world. . . . So it is the policy of
18 the United States to seek and support the growth of
19 democratic movements and institutions in every na-
20 tion and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending
21 tyranny in our world.”.

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

1 (5) Furthermore, the parliaments of emerging
2 democracies are commonly comprised of new legisla-
3 tors, citizens from many walks of life, who face the
4 challenges of creating new democratic systems with-
5 out the benefit of previous legislative experience. The
6 legislatures of these fledgling democracies often lack
7 training, equipment, or resources to carry out their
8 work effectively.

9 (6) Many parliaments do not possess the nec-
10 essary technology, such as modern computer equip-
11 ment, software, or access to databases and electronic
12 resources, to facilitate the timely flow of legislative
13 information to lawmakers and legislative staff.

14 (7) Parliaments in fledgling democracies also
15 frequently lack trained staff to provide nonpartisan
16 policy information, to draft legislation, and to advise
17 legislators on policy matters.

18 (8) Newly democratic parliaments may lack the
19 resources to establish internal libraries, reference
20 materials, and archiving capabilities for use by legis-
21 lators and staff.

22 (9) From 1990 through 1996, the United
23 States House of Representatives, in conjunction with
24 the House Information Systems Office (later known
25 as House Information Resources) and the Congres-

1 sional Research Service (CRS) of the Library of
2 Congress, provided equipment and technical assist-
3 ance to newly democratic parliaments in Central and
4 Eastern European countries, including Albania, Bul-
5 garia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lat-
6 via, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia,
7 and Ukraine, in an effort to develop and strengthen
8 those institutions.

9 (10) This program, commonly known as the
10 “Frost-Solomon Task Force”, not only served the
11 United States foreign policy goal of helping to estab-
12 lish democratic institutions in other countries, but
13 also developed significant goodwill in the countries in
14 which it was implemented. The program was de-
15 signed to improve the efficiency of parliaments and
16 the professionalism of their members and staff, as
17 well as to increase transparency and accountability.

18 (11) A program similar to the Frost-Solomon
19 Task Force would enable Members, officers, and
20 staff of the House of Representatives to share their
21 expertise and experience with their counterparts in
22 other countries, in keeping with the declared policy
23 of the United States to support the growth of demo-
24 cratic institutions, thereby undertaking what Presi-

1 dent Bush called “the idealistic work of helping raise
2 up free governments”.

3 **SEC. 3. ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMISSION.**

4 There is established in the House of Representatives
5 a commission to be known as the House Democracy As-
6 sistance Commission (hereafter in this resolution referred
7 to as the “Commission”).

8 **SEC. 4. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMISSION.**

9 (a) NUMBER AND APPOINTMENT.—The Commission
10 shall be composed of Members of the House of Represent-
11 atives, the number of whom shall be determined by the
12 Speaker of the House of Representatives, in consultation
13 with the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives.
14 Majority party members shall be appointed by the Speaker
15 of the House of Representatives and minority party mem-
16 bers shall be appointed by the Minority Leader of the
17 House of Representatives.

18 (b) TERMS OF MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF REP-
19 RESENTATIVES.—Each member of the Commission shall
20 be appointed for a term that is concurrent with the Con-
21 gress in which the appointment is made. Such a member
22 may be reappointed for one or more subsequent terms in
23 accordance with the preceding sentence.

24 (c) CHAIRPERSON.—The Chairperson of the Commis-
25 sion shall be designated by the Speaker of the House of

1 Representatives from among the members appointed by
2 the Speaker of the House of Representatives under sub-
3 section (a).

4 **SEC. 5. DUTIES OF COMMISSION.**

5 (a) **ACTIVITIES.**—The Commission shall work with
6 the parliaments of selected countries, as determined pur-
7 suant to subsection (b)(4), on a frequent and regular basis
8 in order to—

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

13 (2) enable members and staff of parliaments of
14 selected countries to visit the House of Representa-
15 tives and its support agencies to learn about their
16 operations first-hand; and

17 (3) provide recommendations to the Adminis-
18 trator of the United States Agency for International
19 Development regarding the provision of material as-
20 sistance, such as modern automation and office sys-
21 tems, information technology, and library supplies,
22 that the Commission determines is needed by the
23 parliament of a selected country in order to improve
24 the efficiency and transparency of its work, and to
25 oversee the provision of such assistance.

1 (b) STUDY.—

2 (1) IN GENERAL.—In order to carry out the ac-
3 tivities described in subsection (a), the Commission
4 shall conduct on an annual basis (or more frequently
5 if necessary) a study on the feasibility of programs
6 of assistance for parliaments of countries described
7 in paragraph (2) for the purpose of strengthening
8 the parliamentary infrastructure of such countries.
9 The Commission shall designate those countries de-
10 scribed in paragraph (2) with respect to which a
11 study will be conducted under this subsection. The
12 study shall assess—

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

17 (B) the potential benefit to each par-
18 liament of expert advice from Members and
19 staff of the House of Representatives in areas
20 such as the development of research services
21 and legislative information systems, parliamen-
22 tary procedure, committee operations, budget
23 process, government oversight, and constituent
24 services; and

1 (C) the need in each parliament for mate-
2 rial assistance, such as modern automation and
3 office systems, information technology, and re-
4 search materials, in order to improve efficiency
5 and transparency.

6 (2) COUNTRIES DESCRIBED.—The countries re-
7 ferred to in paragraph (1) are countries that have
8 established or are developing democratic parliaments
9 which would benefit from assistance described in this
10 resolution.

11 (3) SENSE OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTA-
12 TIVES.—It is the sense of the House of Representa-
13 tives that the countries described in paragraph (2)
14 with respect to which studies will be conducted
15 under this subsection should reflect a geographic di-
16 versity and over time should include countries from
17 each of the following regions: Africa, Asia and the
18 Pacific, Europe, the Middle East and Central Asia,
19 and the Western Hemisphere.

20 (4) SELECTED COUNTRIES.—From the coun-
21 tries studied, the Commission shall select one or
22 more parliaments that it recommends should receive
23 assistance under the provisions of this resolution,
24 based on the criteria in paragraph (1). Assistance
25 may be provided under the provisions of this resolu-

1 tion to a parliament selected under this paragraph
2 only if the parliament first expresses to the Speaker
3 of the House of Representatives an interest to re-
4 ceive such assistance.

5 (c) REPORT.—

6 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than September
7 30, 2005, and each September 30 thereafter until
8 September 30, 2009, the Commission shall prepare
9 and submit to the Speaker of the House of Rep-
10 representatives, the Minority Leader of the House of
11 Representatives, the Committee on International Re-
12 lations and other appropriate House committees, the
13 Office of Interparliamentary Affairs of the House of
14 Representatives, and the Administrator of the
15 United States Agency for International Develop-
16 ment, an annual report on the following:

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

19 (B) COMMISSION ACTIVITIES.—In accord-
20 ance with the results of such study, a review of
21 the activities of the Commission in the previous
22 year and a proposal for the activities of the
23 Commission in the following year, as described
24 in subsection (a).

1 **SEC. 7. TERMINATION.**

2 The Commission shall terminate on September 30,
3 2009.

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