

106TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. CON. RES. 67

Expressing the sense of the Congress that freedom of the news media and freedom of expression are vital to the development and consolidation of democracy in Russia and that the United States should actively support such freedoms.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 23, 1999

Mr. LANTOS (for himself, Mr. GILMAN, Mr. GEJDENSON, and Mr. BEREUTER) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on International Relations, and in addition to the Committee on Banking and Financial Services, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the Congress that freedom of the news media and freedom of expression are vital to the development and consolidation of democracy in Russia and that the United States should actively support such freedoms.

Whereas the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union has brought new and unique opportunities for democratic political change and the development of market-oriented economic reform in Russia, but the recent economic difficulties in that country have created turbulent and difficult conditions for the Russian people;

Whereas one of the most important means of assuring the continuation of democratic government and the ultimate guarantee of individual freedom and respect for human rights is an open, independent and free news media;

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;

Whereas freedom of the news media and freedom of expression in Russia today are threatened by elements in the Government, the Duma and elsewhere throughout Russian society which are opposed to freedom of the press and freedom of expression;

Whereas the State Department's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1998 notes that "federal, regional, and local governments continued to exert pressure on journalists by depriving them of access to information, using accreditation procedures to limit access, removing them from their jobs and bringing libel suits against them, and violating their human rights";

Whereas the Country Reports further notes that in the past year "between 250 and 300 lawsuits and other legal actions were brought by the Government against journalists and journalistic organizations during the year in response to unfavorable coverage of government policy or operations" and "in the vast majority of such cases, the Government succeeded in either intimidating or punishing the journalist"; and

Whereas the Duma recently adopted legislation establishing a "Supreme Council" with a mandate to review the content

of television and radio programs and authority to suspend and/or revoke a broadcaster's license: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate*
 2 *concurring)*, That it is the sense of the Congress that—

3 (1) a free news media is vital to the develop-
 4 ment and consolidation of democracy and the devel-
 5 opment of a civil society in Russia;

6 (2) freedom of the news media and freedom of
 7 expression must be safeguarded against those forces
 8 which would limit or suppress these fundamental
 9 human rights;

10 (3) Russian Government leaders, including the
 11 President, the Prime Minister, and Members of the
 12 Russian Parliament, should fully support freedom of
 13 the news media and the right of free expression in
 14 Russia;

15 (4) the United States should actively support
 16 freedom of expression and freedom of the news
 17 media through our programs of assistance to Russia;

18 (5) when considering requests by the Russian
 19 government for loans or other economic assistance
 20 from the International Monetary Fund and other
 21 international financial institutions, the United States
 22 government should take into account the extent to
 23 which Russian government authorities support the

1 full, free, and unfettered freedom of the news media
2 and freedom of expression in deciding whether to
3 support such requests; and

4 (6) the President and the Secretary of State are
5 requested to convey to appropriate Russian Govern-
6 ment officials, including the President, the Prime
7 Minister, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, this
8 expression of the views of the Congress.

○