

108TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. RES. 543

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

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 26, 2004

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina (for himself, Mr. BEREUTER, Mr. DREIER, and Mr. FROST) 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 Commis-
4 sion For Assisting Democratic Parliaments 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 development of democracy around
3 the 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) Establishing democratic institutions in
12 other countries is in the national interest of the
13 United States and constitutes a goal of United
14 States foreign policy.

15 (4) For democracies to mature and to with-
16 stand cyclical turnover in government, strong gov-
17 ernment institutions, particularly national legisla-
18 tures with appropriate infrastructure, are critical.

19 (5) Furthermore, the legislative branches of
20 governments of emerging democracies are largely
21 comprised of new legislators, citizens from many
22 walks of life, who face the challenges of creating new
23 democratic systems without the benefit of previous
24 legislative experience. The legislatures of these fledg-

1 ling democracies lack training, equipment, or re-
2 sources to carry out their work effectively.

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

9 (7) Parliaments in fledgling democracies also
10 frequently lack trained staff to provide nonpartisan
11 policy information, to draft legislation, and to advise
12 legislators on policy matters.

13 (8) Newly democratic parliaments may lack the
14 resources to establish internal libraries, reference
15 materials, and archiving capabilities for use by legis-
16 lators and staff.

17 (9) From 1990 through 1996, the United
18 States House of Representatives, in conjunction with
19 the House Information Systems Office (later known
20 as House Information Resources) and the Congres-
21 sional Research Service (CRS) of the Library of
22 Congress, provided equipment and technical assist-
23 ance to new parliaments in Central and Eastern Eu-
24 ropean countries, including Albania, Bulgaria, the
25 Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lith-

1 uania, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, and
2 Ukraine in an effort to develop and strengthen those
3 institutions.

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

13 (11) A program similar to the Frost-Solomon
14 Task Force, which strengthens professionalism and
15 efficiency within parliaments in democratic coun-
16 tries, continues to be in the national interests of the
17 United States.

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

19 There is established in the House of Representatives
20 a commission to be known as the House Commission For
21 Assisting Democratic Parliaments (hereafter in this reso-
22 lution referred to as the “Commission”).

1 **SEC. 4. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMISSION.**

2 (a) NUMBER AND APPOINTMENT.—The Commission
3 shall be composed of 8 Members of the House of Rep-
4 resentatives—

5 (1) of which 4 members shall be appointed by
6 the Speaker of the House of Representatives; and

7 (2) of which 4 members shall be appointed by
8 the Minority Leader of the House of Representa-
9 tives.

10 (b) TERMS OF MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF REP-
11 RESENTATIVES.—Each member of the Commission shall
12 be appointed for a term that is concurrent with the Con-
13 gress in which the appointment is made. Such a member
14 may be reappointed for one or more subsequent terms in
15 accordance with the preceding sentence.

16 (c) CHAIRPERSON; VICE CHAIRPERSON.—The Chair-
17 person of the Commission shall be designated by the
18 Speaker of the House of Representatives from among the
19 members appointed under subsection (a)(1). The Vice
20 Chairperson shall be designated by the Minority Leader
21 of the House of Representatives from among the members
22 appointed under subsection (a)(2).

23 **SEC. 5. STAFF OF COMMISSION.**

24 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Commission shall appoint
25 and fix the pay of such personnel as the Commission con-
26 siderers appropriate.

1 (b) DETAIL OF LEGISLATIVE BRANCH EMPLOY-
2 EES.—At the request of the Commission, the head of any
3 office in the legislative branch may detail any of the per-
4 sonnel of that office to the Commission to assist it in car-
5 rying out its duties under this resolution. Any individual
6 detailed by an office to the Commission pursuant to this
7 subsection shall retain the individual's status as an em-
8 ployee of the office for purposes of pay and benefits.

9 (c) EMPLOYMENT OF CONSULTANTS.—The Commis-
10 sion may employ consultants to assist in carrying out its
11 duties as described in section 6, including individuals with
12 expertise in development of democratic parliaments, legis-
13 lative systems management, legislative research, par-
14 liamentary procedure, related legislative matters, and
15 technology systems management.

16 **SEC. 6. DUTIES OF COMMISSION.**

17 (a) STUDY.—

18 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Commission shall con-
19 duct an annual study on the feasibility of programs
20 of assistance for parliaments of countries described
21 in paragraph (2) for the purpose of strengthening
22 the parliamentary infrastructure of such countries.
23 This study may be conducted more frequently, if the
24 Commission so decides. The study shall assess—

1 (A) how the parliament in each country
2 studied plays, or could reasonably be expected
3 to play, an independent and substantive role in
4 the legislative process and government over-
5 sight;

6 (B) how improving access to information
7 and developing independent and objective re-
8 search and analytical capabilities would enable
9 the parliament in each country studied to im-
10 prove the effectiveness of members and profes-
11 sional staff and would increase legislative trans-
12 parency and accountability; and

13 (C) how modern automation and office sys-
14 tems would improve efficiency and transparency
15 in the work of the parliament in each country
16 studied.

17 (2) COUNTRIES DESCRIBED.—The countries re-
18 ferred to in paragraph (1) are countries that—

19 (A) have established or are developing
20 democratic parliaments which would benefit
21 from assistance described in this resolution; and

22 (B) express to the United States Govern-
23 ment an interest to receive such assistance.

24 (3) SELECTED COUNTRIES.—From the coun-
25 tries studied, the Commission shall select one or

1 more parliaments that it recommends should receive
2 assistance under the provisions of this resolution,
3 based on the criteria in paragraph (1).

4 (b) REPORT.—The Commission shall prepare and
5 submit to the Speaker of the House of Representatives,
6 the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives, the
7 appropriate House committees, and the Administrator of
8 the United States Agency for International Development,
9 an annual report on the following:

10 (1) RESULTS OF STUDY.—The results of the
11 study conducted pursuant to subsection (a).

12 (2) COMMISSION ACTIVITIES.—In accordance
13 with the results of such study, a proposal for the ac-
14 tivities of the Commission in the following year, as
15 described in subsection (c).

16 (3) RECOMMENDATIONS TO USAID.—(A) In ac-
17 cordance with the results of such study, rec-
18 ommendations to the Administrator of the United
19 States Agency for International Development to de-
20 sign and implement programs of assistance for par-
21 liaments of selected countries, including rec-
22 ommendations to achieve the purposes of subpara-
23 graphs (B) through (D).

24 (B) Such programs of assistance may include—

1 (i) efforts to establish or improve existing
2 libraries of parliaments of selected countries, in-
3 cluding, but not limited to, providing equip-
4 ment, Internet access, books, reference mate-
5 rials, government documents, periodical sub-
6 scriptions and databases; and

7 (ii) efforts to improve the efficiency and
8 transparency of legislation and proceedings in
9 parliaments of selected countries, including, but
10 not limited to, providing equipment, Internet
11 access, and desktop publishing capabilities.

12 (C)(i) In coordination with parliaments in se-
13 lected countries, USAID should develop detailed,
14 multiyear plans for providing equipment, strength-
15 ening library collections, and enhancing research and
16 analysis capabilities in those parliaments.

17 (ii) Plans described in clause (i) should include
18 specific goals to be achieved through the provision of
19 assistance, estimated costs of meeting the goals, the
20 conditions under which assistance should be pro-
21 vided, the type of equipment and resources to be
22 provided, and annual plans for assessing the extent
23 to which the goals have been achieved.

24 (D) All equipment and books that are provided
25 to selected countries should be inscribed to designate

1 the items as gifts from the United States of Amer-
2 ica.

3 (c) ACTIVITIES.—The Commission shall work with
4 the parliaments of selected countries on a frequent and
5 regular basis in order to—

6 (1) allow Commission members and staff to
7 provide expert advice to members and staff of the
8 parliaments of selected countries;

9 (2) enable members and staff of parliaments in
10 selected countries to visit the House of Representa-
11 tives and its support agencies to learn about their
12 operations first-hand; and

13 (3) observe and provide recommendations re-
14 garding the implementation of the assistance pro-
15 grams described in subsection (b)(3).

16 **SEC. 7. TRAVEL.**

17 Members and staff of the Commission are authorized
18 to travel to foreign countries to carry out this resolution.

19 **SEC. 8. DEFINITIONS.**

20 In this resolution:

21 (1) APPROPRIATE HOUSE COMMITTEES.—The
22 term “appropriate House committees” means the
23 Committee on Appropriations, the Committee on
24 House Administration, the Committee on Inter-

1 national Relations, and the Committee on Rules of
2 the House of Representatives.

3 (2) EQUIPMENT.—The term “equipment” in-
4 cludes basic office and automation equipment (copi-
5 ers, fax, telephone answering machines, an initial
6 complement of personal computers and printers,
7 software, CD-ROMs, and auxiliary storage media),
8 and library collections and library support automa-
9 tion, as well as the associated training and technical
10 assistance to effectively use such equipment.

11 **SEC. 9. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

12 There are authorized to be appropriated from the ap-
13 plicable accounts of the House of Representatives to the
14 Commission to carry out this resolution such sums as may
15 be necessary for each of the fiscal years 2005 through
16 2008.

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