

111TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. RES. 1716

Urging the Government of Belarus to conduct a free and fair presidential election on December 19, 2010, and expressing support for the Belarusian people's desire for democratic government that respects human rights and the rule of law.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NOVEMBER 16, 2010

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

RESOLUTION

Urging the Government of Belarus to conduct a free and fair presidential election on December 19, 2010, and expressing support for the Belarusian people's desire for democratic government that respects human rights and the rule of law.

Whereas since his 1994 election as President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenka has established himself as a dictator, abusing executive authority and maintaining himself in office through a series of fundamentally flawed and fraudulent presidential and parliamentary elections and constitutional referenda;

Whereas the Government of Belarus has regularly violated basic freedoms of speech, expression, assembly, association, and religion;

Whereas the Government of Belarus has regularly subjected independent media, nongovernmental organizations, independent trade unions, churches and religious groups, and democratic opposition leaders to harassment, arrest, detention, and violence;

Whereas credible allegations and evidence link top officials of the Government of Belarus with the disappearance of opposition figures Yuri Zakharenka, Viktor Gonchar, and Anatoly Krasovsky in 1999 and journalist Dmitry Zavadsky in 2000, and the Government of Belarus has failed to make a serious effort to bring to justice any of those responsible for the disappearance of these persons;

Whereas the Government of Belarus maintains monopoly control over the Belarusian media and actively suppresses freedom of speech and expression, including by engaging in reprisals against independent media and imposing surveillance of the Internet;

Whereas, on October 27, 2010, Dunja Mijatović, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Representative on Freedom of the Media, urged the Government of Belarus to bring “the media situation more in line with the OSCE commitments”, noting that improvement was “sorely needed as pluralism was non-existing in the broadcasting sector, restricted in the print media and vulnerable on the Internet”;

Whereas the Government of Belarus has not honored its OSCE commitments, including specific provisions of the 1990 Copenhagen Document, with respect to democratic elections;

Whereas presidential or parliamentary elections conducted by the Government of Belarus in 2000, 2001, 2004, 2006, and 2008 were fundamentally unfair and undemocratic;

Whereas the last presidential election, held in March 2006, failed to meet OSCE standards for democratic elections, and was further discredited by abuses of state authority, including the detention of numerous opposition figures, in which the Government of Belarus violated basic rights to freedom of assembly, association, and expression;

Whereas the actions of the Government of Belarus in connection with the December 19, 2010, presidential election will demonstrate whether it is willing to implement OSCE standards and develop toward democratic government that respects human rights and the rule of law;

Whereas the September 27, 2010, through September 29, 2010, OSCE Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) Needs Assessment Mission Report for the December 19 presidential election noted that while Belarusian electoral legislation has recently been improved, serious concerns remain, and the electoral legislation requires further improvement in order to meet OSCE obligations;

Whereas Government of Belarus officials have been responsible for administrative harassment of and pressure on opposition politicians, as well as some media and civil society groups, in the lead-up to the December 19, 2010, presidential election;

Whereas the United States remains committed to supporting those within Belarus who work toward a democratic Belarus that respects human rights and the rule of law, maintain the national independence of Belarus, and pro-

mote the integration of Belarus into the European family of nations and global society; and

Whereas Congress passed the Belarus Democracy Act of 2004 (Public Law 108–347) and Belarus Democracy Reauthorization Act of 2006 (Public Law 109–480) as expressions of support consistent with these aims: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) urges the Government of Belarus to act in
3 accordance with its stated intention to conduct the
4 December 19, 2010, election in a manner consistent
5 with OSCE commitments, including by respecting
6 fundamental freedoms, permitting all contestants to
7 campaign freely, protecting the integrity of early
8 voting, and ensuring an open and transparent vot-
9 ing, counting, and tabulation process;

10 (2) urges the Government of Belarus to meet
11 its OSCE obligations regarding democratic elections,
12 including to meet OSCE standards on free and fair
13 elections as defined in the 1990 Copenhagen Docu-
14 ment;

15 (3) supports the Belarusian people’s desire for
16 democratic government that respects human rights
17 and the rule of law;

18 (4) asserts that it is in the national interests of
19 the United States that Belarus remain an inde-
20 pendent state, and become more democratic, respect-

1 ful of human rights and the rule of law, and inte-
2 grated into the European family of nations and glob-
3 al society; and

4 (5) remains open to reevaluating United States
5 policy toward Belarus as warranted by demonstrable
6 progress in respect of democracy, human rights, and
7 the rule of law.

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