

112TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# H. CON. RES. 97

Expressing the sense of Congress in honor of the life and legacy of Václav Havel.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 27, 2012

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN (for herself, Mr. BERMAN, Mr. BURTON of Indiana, Mr. MEEKS, Mr. MACK, Mr. SIRES, Mr. DIAZ-BALART, Mr. RIVERA, and Mr. ENGEL) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

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## CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of Congress in honor of the life and legacy of Václav Havel.

Whereas Václav Havel, former President of the Czech Republic, passed away on December 18, 2011, at 75 years of age, at his country home in Hrádeček in the Czech Republic;

Whereas Václav Havel was widely recognized and respected throughout the world as a defender of democratic principles and human rights;

Whereas through his extensive writings, Václav Havel courageously challenged the ideology and legitimacy of the authoritarian communist regimes that ruled Central and Eastern Europe during the Cold War;



Whereas Václav Havel, who was imprisoned 3 times by the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia for his advocacy of universal human rights and democratic principles, maintained his convictions in the face of repression;

Whereas Václav Havel was one of the leading organizers of Charter 77, a group of 242 individuals who called for the human rights guaranteed under the 1975 Helsinki accords to be realized in Czechoslovakia;

Whereas Václav Havel was a cofounder of the Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Prosecuted, an organization dedicated to supporting dissidents and their families, which helped to advance the cause of freedom and justice in Czechoslovakia;

Whereas Václav Havel, as leader of the Civic Forum movement, was a key figure in the 1989 peaceful overthrow of the Czechoslovakian communist government known as the Velvet Revolution;

Whereas following the Velvet Revolution, Václav Havel was democratically elected as President of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic in 1990, and after a peaceful partition forming 2 separate states, democratically elected President of the Czech Republic in 1993;

Whereas under the leadership of Václav Havel, the Czech Republic became a prosperous, democratic country and a respected member of the international community;

Whereas under the leadership of Václav Havel, the Czech Republic became a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on March 12, 1999, and continues to be a valued friend and treasured ally of the United States;

Whereas during his lifetime, Václav Havel received praise as one of the world's great democratic leaders and awarded many international prizes recognizing his commitment to peace and democratic principles;

Whereas on July 23, 2003, President George W. Bush honored Václav Havel with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian award of the United States Government, for being "one of liberty's great heroes";

Whereas after leaving office as president of the Czech Republic in February 2003, Václav Havel remained a voice on behalf of democratic dissidents worldwide and against authoritarian regimes, including Belarus, Iran, Cuba, China, and Burma;

Whereas Václav Havel, the author of Charter 77 for human rights and political reform in the former Czechoslovakia and an inspiration for Liu Xiaobo in the drafting of the Charter 08 manifesto for democratic reform in China, joined other Nobel Peace Prize laureates in 2010 to call for the nomination of Liu Xiaobo for the Nobel Peace Prize which the Chinese dissident won that year;

Whereas Václav Havel was a long time advocate for the advancement of human rights in Burma and nominated Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991, and upon hearing of his death Aung San Suu Kyi released a statement noting that "this is not only a loss for one person or one country, it is a great loss for humankind.";

Whereas Václav Havel supported the democratic dissidents in Cuba and sought to increase international cooperation through his involvement with the International Committee for Democracy in Cuba, an organization created

after the brutal 2003 Black Spring crackdown, which promotes international solidarity with the Cuban democracy movement;

Whereas Václav Havel has often condemned the oppressive nature of the Cuban regime and in March 2008 stated, “Cuba’s regime has remained in power . . . by using propaganda, censorship, and violence to create a climate of fear.”;

Whereas the government of the Czech Republic continues to be a strong supporter of a free and democratic Cuba on the international stage;

Whereas Cuban democracy activists in the United States and Cuba have honored the steadfast commitment and support by Václav Havel to bring freedom, justice, and democracy to the Cuban people;

Whereas Václav Havel supported the democratic opposition in Iran, calling for the release of illegally detained Human Rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh and expressing support for the Iranian student protestors in March 2010, and stated, “I have an elevated sensitivity for certain things and am deeply outraged and shocked that for participating in similar demonstrations in Iran, people are not only being sentenced to several years in prison, but are even being executed. It seems to me like an endless barbarity and I firmly believe this savagery is about to come to an end.”;

Whereas Václav Havel was a long-standing advocate for human rights and greater political freedoms in Belarus, and spoke out against the illegal detention of democratic activists in Belarus following the fraudulent elections in 2010; and

Whereas in one of the final public messages Václav Havel issued prior to his death he once again expressed solidarity with political prisoners in Belarus through a public letter to jailed activists Andrey Sannikau and Mikalay Statkevich, in which he stated, “I wish you all the best and freedom for your country . . . I will continue to use any opportunity in the future, together with my friends, to draw the international community’s attention to the violations of basic civil rights in Belarus.”: Now, therefore, be it

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

3            (1) mourns the loss of Václav Havel and offers  
 4        its heartfelt condolences to the Havel family and the  
 5        people of the Czech Republic;

6            (2) recognizes Václav Havel’s courage and com-  
 7        mitment to democratic values in the face of com-  
 8        munist repression;

9            (3) recognizes Václav Havel’s pivotal historical  
 10       legacy in defeating the ideology of communism,  
 11       peacefully ending the Cold War, and building a Eu-  
 12       rope that is democratic, united, and at peace;

13           (4) recognizes Václav Havel’s solidarity with  
 14       democratic dissidents throughout the world and sup-  
 15       port for the expansion of freedom, including in  
 16       Belarus, Iran, Cuba, China, and Burma; and

- 1           (5) reaffirms the commitment of the United
- 2       States to the causes of freedom, democracy, and
- 3       human rights for which Václav Havel stood.

