

As mayor, her duties include presiding over town council meetings and signing documents. But to the residents of her village, she is known as a friend to everyone and as the woman who always has a smile on her face. Mayor Geeben has seen her small community through a lot in the last 40 years, including two major hurricanes.

I am proud to recognize such a vibrant and dedicated woman. On behalf of Florida's 16th Congressional District, I would like to express my gratitude to Mayor Geeben for her many years of service to our community, and to wish her another happy 100 years.

CONGRESS MUST BALANCE THE BUDGET

(Mr. CULBERSON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CULBERSON. Madam Speaker, in our personal lives, when we have our credit cards topped out, when we have a second mortgage on the home, we quit spending money. We balance our own personal budget and we focus on the essentials. And this Congress needs to do the same thing. But, unfortunately, the Obama-Clinton-Pelosi Democratic leadership of the Congress is driving America's economy right over the cliff, like Thelma and Louise, spending money and raising taxes.

The Comptroller of the United States has certified that we are in a \$54 trillion hole; that in order to pay that off, every American would have to write a check for \$175,000. This is outrageous. It is unsupportable.

We need to adopt FRANK WOLF's legislation with Mr. COOPER, making sure that Social Security is solvent, that we balance the Federal budget as rapidly as possible. Above all, this Congress has got to quit spending money on unnecessary things, focus on the bare essentials and quit raising taxes on the American people. Above all, let's not shift all of that liability that is now apparent on Wall Street, this \$1 trillion writeoff that the banks are attempting to shift on to the United States Treasury. We cannot do it. We have got to quit spending money and balance the budget.

□ 1230

ADMINISTRATION EFFORTS IN HOUSING AND SUBPRIME MORTGAGE CRISIS TOO LITTLE AND TOO LATE

(Mr. PALLONE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PALLONE. Madam Speaker, last Friday President Bush traveled to my home county in New Jersey to encourage residents to seek free credit counseling if they faced the threat of losing their homes. And while the credit counseling is good advice, the President's actions were simply too little and too late.

For months, the President has known that the housing and subprime mortgage crisis could force more than 2 million people to lose their homes over the next 5 years. Until yesterday, the President was unwilling to address this crisis in any way. And that is nothing new. For 7 years now, the Bush administration has taken a hands-off approach to Wall Street, allowing the corporations responsible for much of this mortgage crisis to work under the radar without any government oversight or regulation. Finally, the administration recognized yesterday that the President's credit counseling advice was not going to be enough. Treasury Secretary Paulson announced a proposal that finally calls for the regulation of these financial institutes. But, again, this is too little and too late.

Madam Speaker, this House has already acted and will continue to pass legislation that will help homeowners today, and I would hope the President would support our efforts.

FISA

(Mr. GOHMERT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GOHMERT. Madam Speaker, some of our Democratic leaders say they just cannot agree to give immunity to the telecommunication companies for helping after 9/11. Perhaps the reluctance comes from massive contributions from law firms suing these patriotic companies.

Back in the days immediately after 9/11, we didn't know who all was involved in the most violent attack on U.S. soil. We didn't know if another attack was coming the next day or where or who would strike next. In that context, the telecommunications companies were asked to help their country, and they responded. Just as we had men and women respond all over this country to the Nation's call to help fight the forces of evil, these companies responded by helping, and now many in the majority are letting them be shot by friendly fire. These companies heard the cry for help from our Nation and responded, yet some in this body want to hang them out to dry on a firing line as targets for some of their biggest contributors. Let's pass FISA, with immunity from friendly fire.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later.

GEORGIA AND UKRAINE NATO MEMBERSHIP

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 997) expressing the strong support of the House of Representatives for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to enter into a Membership Action Plan with Georgia and Ukraine, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 997

Whereas the sustained commitment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to mutual defense has made possible the democratic transformation of Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia;

Whereas NATO members can and should play a critical role in addressing the security challenges of the post-Cold War era in creating the stable environment needed for emerging democracies in Europe and Eurasia;

Whereas lasting stability and security in Europe and Eurasia require the military, economic, and political integration of emerging democracies into existing European structures;

Whereas, in an era of threats from terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, NATO is increasingly contributing to security in the face of global security challenges for the protection and interests of its member States;

Whereas the Government of Georgia and the Government of Ukraine have each expressed a desire to join the Euro-Atlantic community, and Georgia and Ukraine are working closely with NATO and its members to meet criteria for eventual NATO membership;

Whereas, at the NATO-Ukraine Commission Foreign Ministerial meeting in Vilnius in April 2005, NATO and Ukraine launched an Intensified Dialogue on membership between the Alliance and Ukraine;

Whereas, following a meeting of NATO Foreign Ministers in New York on September 21, 2006, NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer announced the launching of an Intensified Dialogue on membership between NATO and Georgia;

Whereas the Riga Summit Declaration, issued by the heads of state and government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in November 2006, reaffirms that NATO's door remains open to new members and that NATO will continue to review the process for new membership, stating "We reaffirm that the Alliance will continue with Georgia and Ukraine its Intensified Dialogues which cover the full range of political, military, financial, and security issues relating to those countries' aspirations to membership, without prejudice to any eventual Alliance decision. We reaffirm the importance of the NATO-Ukraine Distinctive Partnership, which has its 10th anniversary next year and welcome the progress that has been made in the framework of our Intensified Dialogue. We appreciate Ukraine's substantial contributions to our common security, including through participation in NATO-led operations and efforts to promote regional cooperation. We encourage Ukraine to continue to contribute to regional security. We are determined to continue to assist, through practical cooperation, in the implementation of far-reaching reform efforts, notably in the fields of national security, defense, reform of the defense-industrial sector and fighting corruption. We welcome the commencement of an Intensified

Dialogue with Georgia as well as Georgia's contribution to international peacekeeping and security operations. We will continue to engage actively with Georgia in support of its reform process. We encourage Georgia to continue progress on political, economic and military reforms, including strengthening judicial reform, as well as the peaceful resolution of outstanding conflicts on its territory. We reaffirm that it is of great importance that all parties in the region should engage constructively to promote regional peace and stability.";

Whereas, in January 2008, Ukraine forwarded to NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer a letter, signed by President Victor Yushchenko, Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, and Verkhovna Rada Speaker Arseniy Yatsenyuk, requesting that NATO integrate Ukraine into the Membership Action Plan;

Whereas, in January 2008, Georgia held a referendum on NATO and 76.22 percent of the votes supported membership;

Whereas in February 2008, Georgia forwarded a letter signed by President Mikhail Saakashvili to NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer requesting that NATO integrate Georgia into the Membership Action Plan;

Whereas participation in a Membership Action Plan does not guarantee future membership in the NATO Alliance;

Whereas United States support for the approval of Membership Action Plans for Georgia and Ukraine demonstrates support for the development of democratic institutions in those countries, the process of defense reform and respect for human rights, and does not represent a hostile attempt to expand the Alliance at the expense of the security of any country; and

Whereas NATO membership requires significant national and international commitments and sacrifices and is not possible without the support of the populations of the NATO member states: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That it is the sense of the House of Representatives that—

(1) the House of Representatives—

(A) reaffirms its previous expressions of support for continued enlargement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to include qualified candidates; and

(B) supports the commitment to further enlargement of NATO to include democratic governments that are able and willing to meet the responsibilities of membership;

(2) the expansion of NATO contributes to NATO's continued effectiveness and relevance;

(3) Georgia and Ukraine are strong allies that have made important progress in the areas of defense, democratic, and human rights reform;

(4) a stronger, deeper relationship among the Government of Georgia, the Government of Ukraine, and NATO will be mutually beneficial to those countries and to NATO member states; and

(5) the United States should take the lead in supporting the awarding of a Membership Action Plan to Georgia and Ukraine as soon as possible.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. BERMAN) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include

extraneous material on the resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution, and yield myself such time as I may consume.

I am pleased to support this resolution that expresses the House's backing for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to enter into a Membership Action Plan with Ukraine and Georgia at the NATO summit later this week. This resolution was originally introduced as Senate Resolution 439 by Senators BIDEN and LUGAR, and was passed unanimously on February 14.

I am grateful to my distinguished colleagues on the European Subcommittee, Chairman WEXLER and Ranking Member GALLEGLY, for enabling the House to add its voice to the growing consensus in favor of extending MAP to two of our key allies, and particularly to Congressman WEXLER, who, without his prodding, this resolution might not have appeared on the floor at this particular time.

From April 2 to April 4, heads of state or governments from the 26 member countries of NATO will gather in Bucharest for the largest summit ever. Indeed, NATO has more than doubled in size since its founding by 12 states in 1949. The seven post-Communist countries that became members 3 years ago are now making significant contributions to the work of the Alliance.

In addition to the crucial discussions about the future of NATO operations in Kosovo and Afghanistan, the Bucharest summit will address further enlargement of the Alliance. Decisions on full membership will be made about three Adriatic countries, Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia. Judgments will also be made about the extension of Membership Action Plans to Ukraine and Georgia. This resolution reaffirms that this is the right decision at the right time.

It is important to note that Ukraine and Georgia both have taken the initiative of formally asking the NATO Secretary General for integration into the Membership Action Plan. Both countries have made considerable political, economic, legal, and defense reforms in the two decades since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Ukraine and Georgia have also been active participants in international efforts to preserve peace and stability, contributing to numerous peacekeeping missions around the world. Their continued democratic development and military initiative should be supported.

While it is true that Ukraine and Georgia experienced domestic political crisis last year that raised some doubts about their readiness for MAP, it is equally true that both countries firmly maintained their commitment to pursuing a democratic path and strengthening their political institutions. We must continue to encourage them in this vitally important journey.

Secondly, it is important to recognize that MAP does not confer NATO membership. Rather, it provides a structured reform program that offers support in a broad range of political and technical areas in order to prepare applicant countries for the responsibilities of membership.

It is clear that both countries must complete significant reforms before they can be considered for membership. They, like all countries who have joined the Alliance before them, must be judged to have met all necessary criteria. Even then, all member countries must unanimously support their accession.

In closing, I would like to briefly address the concern about the potential reaction of Russia to the extension of MAP to Georgia and Ukraine. While NATO was originally established as a military alliance to counter potential aggression by the Soviet Union, it now deals with a variety of security threats in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. The Alliance is clearly no longer aimed at Russia. In 1997, NATO and Russia agreed to work together to build a stable, secure, and undivided continent. This partnership was strengthened in 2002, with the creation of the NATO-Russia Council as a vehicle to facilitate joint action. Indeed, President Putin is expected to participate in this week's summit.

While the Alliance is right to be cognizant of the geopolitical impact of its actions, it should focus its assessment about the extension of MAP on the merits of the countries concerned. The U.S. and our allies should continue to nurture and strengthen their relationships with Russia. No one, President Putin nor anyone in Russia, should have a veto power over potential NATO applicants.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise today in support of House Resolution 997, which expresses the strong support of the House of Representatives for the NATO Alliance decision to enter into a Membership Action Plan, or MAP, with the countries of Georgia and Ukraine.

NATO has expanded its membership and its partnerships across Europe in recent years, making the Alliance not just stronger but an instrument for spreading democratic values.

The MAP process was created in 1999 to help those countries aspiring to join NATO to prepare to become members by providing guidance and practical support. The decision to admit a country into the MAP process is a serious one, exceeded only by the decision to admit a country into the Alliance. Countries need to demonstrate that they are sincerely consolidating their democracy, that they are willing to take on the requirements of the MAP process, and that they are willing to participate in missions that go beyond their own borders and direct interests.

Looking at Georgia and Ukraine, Madam Speaker, we recognize that these two countries have made important progress in introducing the systems and the institutions that support democracy. Democratic changes in these two countries have certainly not been easy, and at times the progress of democracy has been confused and uncertain.

Under very difficult circumstances and in the midst of wrenching changing times since they gained their independence, both Ukraine and Georgia have moved ahead with their political reforms, with their democratic institutions of governance, and the conduct of elections. The steps taken by these two countries compare favorably with trends in several nearby states, such as Russia, where true democracy is being steadily and comprehensively suppressed.

Both Georgia and Ukraine have also made great strides in the reform of their defense forces and in the commitment of their forces to peacekeeping and multilateral missions in other regions. Georgia is currently participating in NATO's Partnership For Peace program, and has successfully graduated from the Georgia Train and Equip program in 2004, after achieving its goals of enhancing its military capabilities and implementing military reforms. Georgia currently has 2,000 troops in Iraq, making it the third largest contributor after the United States and Britain. Furthermore, Georgia has troops in Kosovo, and has signed a transit agreement with NATO which allows the Alliance, as well as other nations participating in the International Security Assistance Force, to send supplies to their forces in Afghanistan through Georgian territory. Moreover, yesterday a Georgian defense ministry source said that Georgia is offering to send 500 troops to join NATO operations in Afghanistan.

Ukraine is also a member of the Partnership for Peace program, and currently has troops in Kosovo. Additionally, Ukraine has significantly contributed to multiple U.N. peacekeeping operations, including those in Liberia and Sierra Leone, as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina.

A stronger relationship with NATO should enable Ukraine and Georgia to move forward with their military reforms, prepare to commit to future peacekeeping and stability operations, and, more importantly, Madam Speaker, to consolidate the democracy that they are both seeking.

We understand that access to NATO's Membership Access Plan is not NATO's membership. If Ukraine and Georgia become part of MAP and seek NATO membership in the future, their candidacy will have to be carefully evaluated to make sure that they fully meet NATO's standards and will benefit the Alliance should they become full members. NATO membership for these two countries is not an immediate prospect and is a question that will wait for future consideration.

I note with regret, however, the recent predictable statements by officials of the Russian government alleging that NATO is seeking to surround Russia. They have rattled the nuclear saber to some degree, hoping, I suspect, to intimidate Ukraine in the process. I can only contrast such attitudes and statements with the very laudable step that Ukraine took in 1994, when it relinquished the powerful nuclear arsenal it had inherited from the Soviet Union for the sake of stability in Europe.

The steps taken by Georgia to support the U.S. and NATO, again in the face of terrific and unwarranted pressure from Russia, also deserve our commendation and our gratitude. The resolution before us, Madam Speaker, makes it clear that the United States should take a leading role in supporting these two countries' interests in the Membership Action Plan.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to yield 4 minutes to the chairman of the European Subcommittee, one of the two key authors of the resolution, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. WEXLER).

Mr. WEXLER. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H. Res. 997, urging NATO to provide a Membership Action Plan to Ukraine and Georgia at the NATO summit in Bucharest which begins tomorrow. I want to especially thank Chairman BERMAN for his extraordinary leadership in moving this resolution forward, as well as his very thoughtful remarks in announcing his support for this resolution. I also want to thank my colleague and ranking member on the Europe Subcommittee, Congressman GALLEGLY, as well as Congresswoman SCHWARTZ, who joined us in introducing H. Res. 997.

□ 1245

Madam Speaker, it is clear that NATO is at a crossroads given that important decisions are being made about further enlargement, Kosovo and renewed Balkans instability, and mounting difficulties in Afghanistan.

While tomorrow's summit will undoubtedly focus on these pressing issues, it is also a golden opportunity for the alliance to take steps forward to bolster transatlantic security and further entrench democracy, freedom, and the rule of law throughout Europe.

I believe it is in both America's and Europe's interest to further integrate Georgia and Ukraine into the West. Tblisi and Kiev have demonstrated their commitment to joining the United States and our allies in addressing security challenges from the Balkans to Iraq and to rebuilding Afghanistan.

As we debate this resolution, it is important to remember that the goal of NATO enlargement since the mid-1990s has been to achieve a broader, more secure Europe. Providing a membership action plan for Ukraine and Georgia would further consolidate democracy

and stability in eastern Europe and the Caucasus region; and, is essential to fulfilling NATO's 1997 "open door" policy that ensures that any European nation that meets alliance standards and can contribute to Euro-Atlantic security be considered for membership.

Georgia and Ukraine have much to accomplish before they can be offered NATO membership. Since the MAP process will further require democratic and security reforms in Kiev and Tblisi, it is crucial for the Ukrainian and Georgian governments to know that their efforts and aspirations are supported by this Congress as well as all NATO members.

Madam Speaker, I was in Kiev just last month, and there was an extraordinary development in Kiev with the president, prime minister and speaker of their parliament all formally asking for the NATO membership action plan. It is an extraordinary statement of unity, and it is incredibly important that this House go on record in support of those pro-democratic politicians and officeholders in Kiev as well as in Georgia.

To that end, I urge my colleagues to support H. Res. 997, and send a strong message to our NATO allies on the eve of the Bucharest Summit. And I thank Chairman BERMAN for his extraordinary leadership in this regard.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from California (Mr. GALLEGLY), the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Europe and an original cosponsor of the resolution before us.

(Mr. GALLEGLY asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GALLEGLY. Madam Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank Chairman WEXLER and Chairman BERMAN for their kind words in their opening statements. I stand here today to rise in strong support of House Resolution 997 which reaffirms the support of the House of Representatives for NATO enlargement.

The resolution also specifically calls on the United States to take the lead in supporting closer integration between Ukraine, Georgia and NATO. I would like to commend Representative WEXLER, as I mentioned earlier, the chairman of the Europe Subcommittee, for introducing this measure and for being a strong, consistent advocate for strengthening our bilateral ties with Ukraine and Georgia.

Both of these allies have demonstrated the military capabilities and political reforms required to provide concrete benefits to the alliance. In the past several years, Ukrainian forces have participated with NATO troops in peacekeeping operations in the Balkans and Afghanistan. They have also made important contributions to coalition forces in Iraq in 2004 and 2005.

Georgia has also shown they are ready to take the next step toward NATO membership. Georgia has undertaken a top-to-bottom reform of their

military forces, often working closely with U.S. forces in this effort.

As previously mentioned by Representative ROS-LEHTINEN, with over 2000 troops in Iraq, Georgia today has the third largest troop contingent in that country after the U.S. and Britain.

Madam Speaker, both Ukraine and Georgia are ready, willing and able to integrate more fully with NATO. Again, I would like to recognize Representative WEXLER for his hard work on H. Res. 997 on behalf of a stronger NATO, and I urge passage of this resolution.

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania (Ms. SCHWARTZ).

Ms. SCHWARTZ. Madam Speaker, I rise as co-chair of the Congressional Georgia Caucus, and I rise in favor of House Resolution 997 which expresses support for extending NATO membership action plan status to Georgia and Ukraine.

I do thank Chairman BERMAN and Congressman WEXLER for their leadership in this bipartisan effort to support Georgia and Ukraine in their entrance into NATO.

As leading democratic reformers in Eastern Europe, Ukraine and Georgia are both worthy of advancing their participation in NATO from "intensified dialogue" to membership action plan, MAP, status during the Bucharest Summit. This is an important and timely next step toward the goal of becoming full members of NATO.

Both of these nations are keenly interested in joining NATO and working closely with Western allies. They have already demonstrated this by actively participating in both U.S. and NATO forces. More than 2,000 Georgian soldiers currently serve alongside U.S. military personnel in Iraq, making it the third largest coalition partner. And Ukraine is the only nonmember state taking an active role in all of NATO's peacekeeping and anti-terrorist operations.

As a member of the House Democracy Assistance Commission, I had the great pleasure and opportunity to meet both Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili and Ukrainian President Yushchenko in their home capitals. Their commitment to democratization in their respective nations is impressive, and is an important example for other emerging democracies around the world.

Certainly both nations have work to do to stabilize and ensure development of permanent democratic institutions. Yet, as recently established democracies changing a history of totalitarian rule, they are making enormous strides. They are ready to be granted MAP and be given the opportunity to work toward full NATO membership.

In a world with real threats against us, it is critically important that we strengthen relationships with those nations that choose to be our allies. Georgia and Ukraine are key allies in an important region of the world. We should stand with our friends. We

should stand with Georgia and Ukraine, and we should pass this resolution today.

Mrs. MILLER of Michigan. Madam Speaker, I rise today to offer my wholehearted support of Ukraine's desire to be admitted as a member of NATO.

When Ukraine declared her independence in 1990 from the Soviet Union, she stated her desire to be a member of the community of free nations.

As this young democracy matures, it is incumbent upon the nation members of NATO to not only support their development, but ally with them to ensure the commitment to freedom.

The United States has enjoyed a strong relationship with the Ukraine and it is my hope that this relationship grows even stronger with time as both of our countries work to improve stability around the world.

It is regrettable that the objections seem to come from the very country that once held the Ukraine under their absolute control. In my opinion the objections of Russia are not sufficient to deny NATO membership for Ukraine.

As someone who represents a great many citizens of Ukrainian descent I understand well the desire of the Ukrainian people for freedom.

America has always answered the call to support and defend those who yearn to be free and it is time to answer the call of Ukraine.

I urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

Mr. PAUL. Madam Speaker, I rise in opposition to this resolution calling for the further expansion of NATO to the borders of Russia. NATO is an organization whose purpose ended with the end of its Warsaw Pact adversary. When NATO struggled to define its future after the cold war, it settled on attacking a sovereign state, Yugoslavia, which had neither invaded nor threatened any NATO member state.

This current round of NATO expansion is a political reward to governments in Georgia and Ukraine that came to power as a result of U.S.-supported revolutions, the so-called Orange Revolution and Rose Revolution. The governments that arose from these street protests were eager to please their U.S. sponsor and the U.S., in turn, turned a blind eye to the numerous political and human rights abuses that took place under the new regimes. Thus the U.S. policy of "exporting democracy" has only succeeded in exporting more misery to the countries it has targeted.

NATO expansion only benefits the U.S. military industrial complex, which stands to profit from expanded arms sales to new NATO members. The "modernization" of former Soviet militaries in Ukraine and Georgia will mean tens of millions in sales to U.S. and European military contractors. The U.S. taxpayer will be left holding the bill, as the U.S. Government will subsidize most of the transactions. Providing U.S. military guarantees to Ukraine and Georgia can only further strain our military. This NATO expansion may well involve the U.S. military in conflicts as unrelated to our national interest as the breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia in Georgia. The idea that American troops might be forced to fight and die to prevent a small section of Georgia from seceding is absurd and disturbing.

Madam Speaker, NATO should be disbanded, not expanded.

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of House

Resolution 997, which expresses our support for bids by Ukraine and Georgia to attain Membership Action Plans for joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO. I am proud to be a cosponsor of this resolution.

Ukraine and Georgia are both perched on the fulcrum of democracy, with their future on balance. On one side of the balance lies a future marked by integration with NATO and Europe, continuing progress toward the establishment of stable democracy, security, and prosperity.

Each nation faces its own challenges on the other side of the balance. Ukraine confronts persistent threats to its fragile democracy, a rancorous division between its eastern and western regions, and difficult economic challenges. Georgia's democracy is also threatened, both by separatist movements in Abkhazia and Ossetia and by the lack of effective opposition in government. Its economy is undermined by severe unemployment.

This week's NATO summit in Bucharest will determine, at least in the near-term, in which direction the balance will tilt. NATO membership will bring with it economic, political, and military integration with Europe, helping to solidify democratic institutions, expand each nation's economy, and strengthen security. A Membership Action Plan is not equivalent to NATO membership and should not be conflated with NATO membership, but it is certainly a crucial step toward this goal. To reject the bids by Ukraine and Georgia for Membership Action Plans would be to deal democracy a significant setback.

As NATO nations gather to pass judgment on these bids, hovering over the summit is a specter in the form of an increasingly antagonistic Russia. Fear of further deterioration in relations with Russia no doubt shapes the hesitation of some of our European allies in proceeding with these Membership Action Plans.

Russia must understand that NATO membership does not cast a choice between Europe and Russia. Rather, the choice is between political and economic integration and isolation. Russia must also realize that seeking NATO membership is not a path foisted upon nations by NATO itself, but rather one sought freely and enthusiastically by prospective member nations. Finally, our European allies must persevere in the principle that decisions must be made in the best interests of our alliance, never allowing any nation to hold a veto on our collective security and shared values.

As many of my other colleagues have stated, both Ukraine and Georgia have already demonstrated their worth to NATO with contributions to NATO efforts in Afghanistan, Kosovo, and elsewhere. There is no doubt that the alliance would benefit from their inclusion in this multilateral security architecture that will be essential for confronting numerous major security challenges in the 21st century. Setting Ukraine and Georgia on a path toward NATO membership is not only vital to their future, it is vital to ours as well.

I urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

Mr. ROYCE. Madam Speaker, I'd like to express reservations about H. Res. 997.

NATO expansion is not a casual affair. We're talking about adding countries whose

security we're committing American lives and treasure to defend. While this resolution only endorses the beginning of a membership process, it sets the stage for expanding vital American security concerns. At a time when some Americans are questioning our growing security commitments around the globe, should we be moving to ensure Ukraine and Georgia's security?

We must be realistic about the state of NATO. The organization is not well. In Afghanistan, most NATO member states haven't answered the call, choosing not to provide troops or to provide troops only for very limited missions. One observer noted that, "The inability or unwillingness of certain nations to shoulder the burden of NATO's obligation in Afghanistan is ripping the heart out of the alliance . . ." I'm not convinced that adding new members, each with diverse interests, aids in rebuilding NATO's consensus. Expansion doesn't always mean strengthening.

Sure, these countries have committed troops in dangerous areas, for which they should be commended. But a hard headed analysis must ask whether those commitments would be maintained once NATO membership was achieved?

Expansion is divisive among some of the longest-standing NATO members. This week in Bucharest, Germany has objected to the process this resolution endorses, effectively stopping it. Chancellor Merkel's government cited concerns over political unrest in Georgia, and the lack of support for joining NATO among Ukrainians. Others ask, rightly, "What's the rush?"

First and foremost, we should ask "What's in our national security interest?" Secondly, we should ask "What's in the best interest of NATO?" I am not convinced that expanding NATO to these two countries advances those causes. That's why I reluctantly oppose this resolution backed by my colleagues and friends.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. BERMAN) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 997, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

EXPRESSING SENSE OF HOUSE REGARDING CREATION OF REFUGEE POPULATIONS

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 185) expressing the sense of the House of Representatives regarding the creation of refugee populations in the Middle East, North Africa, and the Persian Gulf region as a result of human rights violations, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 185

Whereas armed conflicts in the Middle East have created refugee populations numbering in the millions and comprised of peoples from many ethnic, religious, and national backgrounds;

Whereas Jews have lived mostly as a minority in the Middle East, North Africa, and the Persian Gulf region for more than 2,500 years;

Whereas the United States has long voiced its concern about the mistreatment of minorities and the violation of human rights in the Middle East and elsewhere;

Whereas the United States continues to play a pivotal role in seeking an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East and to promoting a peace that will benefit all the peoples of the region;

Whereas United States administrations historically have called for a just solution to the Palestinian refugee problem;

Whereas the Palestinian refugee issue has received considerable attention from countries of the world while the issue of Jewish refugees from the Arab and Muslim worlds has received very little attention;

Whereas a comprehensive peace in the region will require the resolution of all outstanding issues through bilateral and multilateral negotiations involving all concerned parties;

Whereas approximately 850,000 Jews have been displaced from Arab countries since the declaration of the State of Israel in 1948;

Whereas the United States has demonstrated interest and concern about the mistreatment, violation of rights, forced expulsion, and expropriation of assets of minority populations in general, and in particular, former Jewish refugees displaced from Arab countries as evidenced, inter alia, by—

(1) the Memorandum of Understanding signed by President Jimmy Carter and Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan on October 4, 1977, which states that "[a] solution of the problem of Arab refugees and Jewish refugees will be discussed in accordance with rules which should be agreed";

(2) after negotiating the Camp David Accords, the Framework for Peace in the Middle East, the statement by President Jimmy Carter in a press conference on October 27, 1977, that "Palestinians have rights . . . obviously there are Jewish refugees . . . they have the same rights as others do"; and

(3) in an interview after Camp David II in July 2000, at which the issue of Jewish refugees displaced from Arab lands was discussed, the statement by President Clinton that "There will have to be some sort of international fund set up for the refugees. There is, I think, some interest, interestingly enough, on both sides, in also having a fund which compensates the Israelis who were made refugees by the war, which occurred after the birth of the State of Israel. Israel is full of people, Jewish people, who lived in predominantly Arab countries who came to Israel because they were made refugees in their own land.";

Whereas the international definition of a refugee clearly applies to Jews who fled the persecution of Arab regimes, where a refugee is a person who "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country" (the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees);

Whereas on January 29, 1957, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

(UNHCR), determined that Jews fleeing from Arab countries were refugees that fell within the mandate of the UNHCR;

Whereas United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 of November 22, 1967, calls for a "just settlement of the refugee problem" without distinction between Palestinian and Jewish refugees, and this is evidenced by—

(1) the Soviet Union's United Nations delegation attempt to restrict the "just settlement" mentioned in Resolution 242 solely to Palestinian refugees (S/8236, discussed by the Security Council at its 1382nd meeting of November 22, 1967, notably at paragraph 117, in the words of Ambassador Kouznetsov of the Soviet Union), but this attempt failed, signifying the international community's intention of having the resolution address the rights of all Middle East refugees; and

(2) a statement by Justice Arthur Goldberg, the United States' Chief Delegate to the United Nations at that time, who was instrumental in drafting the unanimously adopted Resolution 242, where he has pointed out that "The resolution addresses the objective of 'achieving a just settlement of the refugee problem'. This language presumably refers both to Arab and Jewish refugees, for about an equal number of each abandoned their homes as a result of the several wars.";

Whereas in his opening remarks before the January 28, 1992, organizational meeting for multilateral negotiations on the Middle East in Moscow, United States Secretary of State James Baker made no distinction between Palestinian refugees and Jewish refugees in articulating the mission of the Refugee Working Group, stating that "[t]he refugee group will consider practical ways of improving the lot of people throughout the region who have been displaced from their homes";

Whereas the Roadmap to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, which refers in Phase III to an "agreed, just, fair, and realistic solution to the refugee issue," uses language that is equally applicable to all persons displaced as a result of the conflict in the Middle East;

Whereas Israel's agreements with Egypt, Jordan, and the Palestinians have affirmed that a comprehensive solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict will require a just solution to the plight of all "refugees";

Whereas the initiative to secure rights and redress for Jews who were forced to flee Arab countries does not conflict with the right of Palestinian refugees to claim redress;

Whereas all countries should be aware of the plight of Jews and other minority groups displaced from countries in the Middle East, North Africa, and the Persian Gulf;

Whereas an international campaign is proceeding in some 40 countries to record the history and legacy of Jewish refugees from Arab countries;

Whereas a just, comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace cannot be reached without addressing the uprooting of centuries-old Jewish communities in the Middle East, North Africa, and the Persian Gulf; and

Whereas it would be inappropriate and unjust for the United States to recognize rights for Palestinian refugees without recognizing equal rights for Jewish refugees from Arab countries: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That—

(1) for any comprehensive Middle East peace agreement to be credible and enduring, the agreement must address and resolve all outstanding issues relating to the legitimate rights of all refugees, including Jews, Christians, and other populations, displaced from countries in the Middle East; and

(2) the President should instruct the United States Representative to the United Nations and all United States representatives in bilateral and multilateral fora to—