

difficult economic and social barriers. Therefore, it is highly significant that our countries are now working together. The United States and Brazil have much in common, and our large vibrant minority communities are simply another trait we share. As Chairman of the Brazil Caucus, I believe that working together to stamp out discrimination only helps to bring our countries and peoples closer together, while each nation learns from the other's success stories in fighting ethnic discrimination.

I thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for their support of this important resolution. Our Congress can and should play a vital role in ensuring the success of the Joint Action Plan to Eliminate Racial and Ethnic Discrimination and Promote Equality. Our partnership on the Joint Action Plan is a positive step in strengthening our friendship and promoting racial and ethnic equality.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 1254, 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.

RECOGNIZING THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE INDEPENDENCE OF BULGARIA

Mr. BAIRD. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 1383) recognizing the 100th anniversary of the independence of Bulgaria, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 1383

Whereas on September 22, 1908, Bulgaria proclaimed its independence to become a full-fledged sovereign state under the name of the Kingdom of Bulgaria;

Whereas this act marked the end of a long and dedicated struggle the Bulgarian people waged against their ages-long foreign occupier, the Ottoman Empire, which conquered the medieval Bulgarian state in the 14th Century;

Whereas although liberated in 1878, Bulgaria remained divided and dependent on its formal ruler;

Whereas with the proclamation of independence 100 years ago, Bulgaria took its rightful place among the family of nations and secured for its citizens in its constitution of 1991 the right to life, freedom and property;

Whereas the Republic of Bulgaria is a democratic nation, a strong defender of freedom and human rights, and a staunch ally of the United States;

Whereas the United States established diplomatic relations with the Republic of Bulgaria on September 19, 1903;

Whereas the United States acknowledges the courage of the Bulgarian people in deciding to pursue a free, democratic, and independent Bulgaria and their steadfast perseverance in building a society based on the rule of law, respect for human rights, and a free market economy;

Whereas the people of the Republic of Bulgaria strive to preserve and continue their tradition of ethnic and religious tolerance;

Whereas the Bulgarian Parliament, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, King Boris III, politicians, intellectuals, and citizens all played a part in the resistance to Nazi pressure to carry out the deportation of Jews living in Bulgaria by preventing the deportation of 50,000 Jews to Nazi concentration camps;

Whereas Bulgaria was the only European country during World War II to increase its Jewish population;

Whereas Bulgaria experienced its first free election after the end of the Cold War in June 1990;

Whereas North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) heads of state and member governments, meeting in Prague on November 21, 2002, invited Bulgaria into NATO after verified reforms of Bulgaria's political, economic and military systems were completed in preparation for membership;

Whereas Bulgaria was accepted as a member of NATO in April 2004, and has shown determination in enacting the continued reforms necessary to be a productive, contributing member of the Alliance;

Whereas Bulgaria was welcomed into the European Union in January 2007;

Whereas the World Bank recently classified Bulgaria as one of the top 10 nations to have undertaken important economic reforms to attract business investment;

Whereas Bulgaria is the only European Union nation to be listed in the top 10 of the World Bank's classification;

Whereas Bulgaria has promoted stability in the Balkans by rendering support to Operation Allied Force and Operation Joint Guardian led by NATO, and by providing peacekeeping troops to the Stabilization Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina (SFOR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to the Kosovo Force (KFOR) in Kosovo;

Whereas Bulgaria initiated a historic strengthening of military relations by inviting the United States Armed Forces to begin conducting joint exercises with its forces in Bulgaria, the first voluntary defense cooperation agreement with foreign troops throughout Bulgarian history, including the 1,300 years before its declaration of independence; and

Whereas Bulgaria has stood firmly by the United States in the cause of advancing freedom worldwide during its tenure as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) commends the Republic of Bulgaria for its efforts to strengthen relations with the United States over the past 100 years;

(2) recognizes the continued contributions of Bulgaria toward bringing peace, stability, and prosperity to the region of South Eastern Europe, including its contributions to regional security and democratic stability;

(3) salutes the willing cooperation of Bulgaria and its increasingly vital role as a valuable ally in the war against international terrorism; and

(4) encourages opportunities for greater cooperation between the United States and Bulgaria in the political, military, economic, and cultural spheres.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. BAIRD) and the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Washington.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BAIRD. Mr. 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 Washington?

There was no objection.

Mr. BAIRD. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution and yield myself as much time as I may consume.

I'm delighted to support this resolution marking the 100th anniversary of the independence of Bulgaria. I would like to note my good friend Representative JOE WILSON of South Carolina for his leadership in ensuring that the House mark this important date.

Founded over 1300 years ago in 681, Bulgaria is one of the most ancient countries in the world. Often referred to as the cradle of Slavic culture, Bulgaria was the birthplace of Orpheus and Spartacus. It has given the world the Cyrillic alphabet, beautiful handicrafts, and folk music.

In September 1908, Bulgaria threw off the yoke of Ottoman occupation, proclaimed its independence, and became a sovereign state under the name of the Kingdom of Bulgaria. In the 100 years since it achieved independent statehood, Bulgaria has become a Democratic nation, a staunch ally of the United States, and an active participant in the transatlantic community.

Bulgaria joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO, in April 2004. It has actively participated in NATO missions aimed at ensuring the security and stability of the Balkans. Bulgaria provided support for Operation Allied Force and Operation Joint Guardian and furnished peacekeeping troops to the Stabilization Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the Kosovo Force.

Bulgaria also has been a country of strategic importance to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan allowing the U.S. to establish bases in the country and make use of its technical facilities. Bulgaria was welcomed into the European Union in January 2007, which made the Cyrillic alphabet the third official alphabet of the Union after Latin and Greek.

Bulgaria has also sought to strengthen its ties to the United States. Bulgarians began immigrating to this country in large numbers between 1903 and 1910, seeking economic opportunities and political freedoms during a time of great turmoil on the continent. According to the United States Census of 2000, there were 63,000 people of Bulgarian descent living in the United States. They're undoubtedly making a rich contribution to the tapestry of American life.

This resolution rightly encourages opportunities for even greater collaboration between our two nations in the political, economic, military, and cultural realms.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating the Bulgarian people on the 100th anniversary of their independence and in celebrating enduring Bulgarian-American friendship.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak on House Resolution 1383, a resolution recognizing the 100th anniversary of Bulgaria's independence. I want to thank the Ranking Member on the committee, Representative ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, and Chairman HOWARD BERMAN, in addition to Chairman ROBERT WEXLER of the Subcommittee on Europe and Ranking Member of that subcommittee, ELTON GALLEGLY of California, for their support in bringing this resolution to the floor.

I am grateful to serve as the cochair of the Bulgaria Caucus of Congress along with congresswoman ELLEN TAUSCHER of California. We work for parliamentary exchanges between Bulgaria and America, along with hosting Bulgarian officials and citizens in Washington.

The people of Bulgaria should be proud that on September 22 of this year they will celebrate 100 years of independence.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Bulgaria struggled to free itself from the Ottoman Empire. Toward the end of that century, they once again fought to emerge from beneath Totalitarianism following the defeat of Communism. Bulgaria's story is a success because of the hard work and dedication of its people. They should be proud of these accomplishments.

On a personal note, 18 years ago I had the great honor to serve as an elected observer for Bulgaria's first and free elections as a participant with the International Republican Institute. At the time, I saw a nation battling the challenges of building a democratic society based on the rule of law. Communist Totalitarianism was replaced by freedom and democracy.

Bulgarians have faced the opportunities and the difficulties associated with building a prosperous free economy.

Additionally, just last month I served and visited with American troops stationed in Bulgaria on a codel led by Congresswoman MADELEINE BORDALLO of Guam, and I am proud to report that the immense economic and diplomatic progress the people of Bulgaria have made is remarkable. We were hosted by the National Assembly Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Solomon Passy. Chairman Passy served with great distinction as the former foreign minister of Bulgaria.

We met with former Bulgarian Minister to Greece Stephan Stoyanov, along with Prime Minister Sergei Stanishev, and National Assembly Speaker Georgi Pirinski. During my visit to Bulgaria in 2005, I was honored

to be hosted by President Georgi Parvanov.

Indeed, the World Bank recently classified Bulgaria as one of the top 10 nations to have undertaken important economic reforms to attract business investment. Bulgaria, admitted to the European Union in 2007, is the only EU Nation to be listed in the top 10.

In closing, we should recognize the people of Bulgaria for their continued support in the global war on terrorism. I have visited Bulgarian troops in Afghanistan and was proud that my son, Alan, served with Bulgaria during his year of service in Iraq.

As a dynamic member of NATO since 2004 and as a nation of free and democratic people, Bulgaria has stood with America in these difficult times. The partnership with America has never been stronger, built by Bulgaria's ambassador to the United States, Elena Poptodorova.

So today we recognize this immense achievement of theirs and commend them on 100 years of independence.

Again, I want to thank Chairman BERMAN, Ranking Member ROS-LEHTINEN, subcommittee Chairman WEXLER and subcommittee Ranking Member GALLEGLY for their work today.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BAIRD. I would echo the thanks and congratulate the gentleman on a successful resolution.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of House Resolution 1383, and I commend our colleague, Mr. JOE WILSON of South Carolina, for introducing it. I appreciate Mr. WILSON's formation of the Bulgaria Caucus to promote the partnership of Bulgaria and America. Bulgaria declared its independence 100 years ago, on September 22nd, 1908.

Like so much of the rest of Europe, however, Bulgaria then suffered through a very difficult and tumultuous 20th Century.

After suffering through two world wars, Bulgaria was then trapped for over four decades behind the "Iron Curtain" that fell across Eastern Europe, and its people suffered from the repression and stagnation that accompanied the imposition of the Bulgarian communist regime by the former Soviet Union.

After the communist bloc in Eastern Europe fell apart, Bulgaria was at last able to hold a truly free election in June 1990.

It then faced fresh difficulties, however, as it went through a period of social and economic turmoil that culminated in a severe economic financial crisis in 1996 and 1997.

With the help of the international community, the Bulgarian government initiated a series of difficult but necessary economic reforms.

Those reforms continue even today, but their results so far have helped Bulgaria noticeably improve its economic situation.

In fact, according to the World Bank, in 2006 Bulgaria attracted the highest levels of foreign direct investment—as a share of GDP—of all of the countries of Eastern Europe.

Challenges remain, but the market reforms undertaken so far have pointed Bulgaria in the right direction.

Bulgaria must also be commended for the political reforms it has implemented since 1990.

Right at the start, in 1991, the country adopted a new constitution, which created a parliamentary democracy that limited the powers of the President and also balanced those powers against the position of the Prime Minister—with the Prime Minister ultimately held accountable to the legislature.

So, Bulgaria has made progress toward a future of democracy and economic prosperity, but it nevertheless faces continuing challenges, including a rather serious problem in the form of corruption and organized crime.

We remain supportive of Bulgaria's efforts to address those twin scourges, and I note that, in the wake of very strong concerns expressed by the European Union, the Bulgarian government has indeed begun to reform its Interior Ministry and has created a State Agency for National Security to fight such corruption and organized crime.

We certainly wish it great success in that specific effort.

Finally, I note that, while continuing with its reform efforts at home, Bulgaria has also become an active member of the international community, contributing military personnel to participate in international missions in the countries of Cambodia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq.

Furthermore, in a very important step in March 2004, Bulgaria became a formal ally of the United States by becoming a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization—NATO.

In its new role—as a member of the NATO Alliance—Bulgaria has proven itself to be a constructive and positive force in working for stability in the Black Sea region, and we are grateful for that.

This year, on the occasion of its 100th anniversary as an independent state, we commend Bulgaria on the great progress it made in just the past eighteen years.

I ask my colleagues to join me in supporting this resolution honoring the independence of our friend and ally, Bulgaria.

Mr. BAIRD. I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Washington (Mr. BAIRD) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 1383, 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.

□ 1345

COMMEMORATING BHUTAN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SMITHSONIAN FOLKLIFE FESTIVAL

Mr. BAIRD. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 1307) commemorating the Kingdom of Bhutan's participation in the 2008 Smithsonian Folklife Festival and commending the people and the Government of the Kingdom of Bhutan for their commitment to holding elections and broadening political participation, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.