

SUBCOMMITTEE ON RURAL REVITALIZATION,
CONSERVATION, FORESTRY AND CREDIT

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry, Subcommittee on Rural Revitalization, Conservation, Forestry and Credit, be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, May 21, 2008 at 2:30 p.m. in room 332 of the Russell Senate office building.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, on behalf of Senator DODD, I ask unanimous consent that LCDR Christopher Martin, a congressional fellow in Senator DODD's office, be allowed floor privileges for the duration of the debate on H.R. 2642.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Alissa Doobay of my staff be granted floor privileges for the duration of today's session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that a fellow in my office, LCDR John Croghan, be granted the privilege of the floor for the remainder of the debate on the supplemental bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THANKING THE PRESIDING
OFFICER AND STAFF

Mr. REID. Mr. President, first of all, let me express my appreciation to you for your patience and, of course, all the staff. We have been trying to get where we are. It has been a long night. Hopefully, this is pointing us in the right direction.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT AGREEMENT—HOUSE MESSAGE ON H.R. 2642

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following any leader time on Thursday, May 22, the Senate then resume consideration of the House message on H.R. 2642, and there be 2 hours of debate equally divided and controlled between the leaders or their designees; that upon the use or yielding back of time, the cloture motion with respect to the Reid motion to concur in House amendment No. 2 with an amendment be withdrawn, and the Reid second-degree amendment be withdrawn; that the Senate then proceed to vote on adoption of the motion to concur in House amendment No. 2 with an amendment; that the motion to concur be subject to an affirmative 60-vote threshold, that if the motion achieves that threshold, it be agreed

to, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table; that if the motion to concur fails to achieve 60 votes, it be withdrawn, and Senator REID be recognized to move to concur in House amendment No. 2 with an amendment which is the Webb GI bill; that the motion be subject to an affirmative 60-vote threshold; and that if it achieves that threshold, the motion to concur be agreed to, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table; that if it fails to achieve 60 affirmative votes, it be withdrawn, and the Senate disagree to House amendment No. 2; that upon disposition of House amendment No. 2, Senator REID be recognized to move to concur in House amendment No. 1 with an amendment which is the text of the committee-reported amendments Nos. 2 and 3 on funding and Iraq policy; that Senator SANDERS then be recognized to make a rule XVI point of order against section 11312 of the Reid motion; that if the point of order is sustained, Senator REID be recognized to move to concur in House amendment No. 1 with an amendment which is the text of committee amendments Nos. 2 and 3 minus section 11312; that it be subject to a 60 affirmative vote threshold, and that if it achieves that threshold, it be agreed to, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table; that if it fails to achieve the 60-vote threshold, it be withdrawn, and Senator REID be recognized to move to concur in House amendment No. 1 with an amendment which is the text of the committee amendment No. 2 minus section 11312; that the motion be subject to an affirmative 60-vote threshold; and that if the motion achieves that threshold, it be agreed to, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table; if it fails to achieve that threshold, then it be withdrawn, and the Senate disagree to House amendment No. 1; that no further points of order be in order, with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. Thank you, Mr. President, very much.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. REID. I would now note for everyone within the sound of my voice, we are still having some problems with the farm bill because of the enrolling not having been done, as we understand it, in the House. They failed to enroll one section of the 15 sections. But we are going to deal with that tomorrow in some detail. And because of that, we will have to hold up doing the budget until we try to work something out tomorrow or at some later time.

SUPPORTING HUMANITARIAN
ASSISTANCE IN SOMALIA

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Relations be discharged from consideration of S. Res. 541 and the Senate proceed to its consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 541) supporting humanitarian assistance, protection of civilians, accountability for abuses in Somalia, and urging concrete progress in line with the Transitional Federal Charter of Somalia toward the establishment of a viable government of national unity.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate, and that any statements related to this matter be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 541) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. RES. 541

Whereas, despite the formation of the internationally recognized Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in 2004, there has been little improvement in the governance or stability of southern and central Somalia, and stability in the northern region of Puntland has deteriorated;

Whereas governance failures in Somalia have permitted and contributed to escalating violence, egregious human rights abuses, and violations of international humanitarian law, which occur with impunity and have led to an independent system of roadblocks, checkpoints, and extortion that hinders trade, business, and the delivery of desperately needed humanitarian assistance;

Whereas the Government of Ethiopia intervened in Somalia in December 2006 against the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) and continues to serve as the primary security force for the TFG in Somalia;

Whereas a United Nations Monitoring Group on Somalia report presented to the United Nations Security Council on July 20, 2007, alleged that Eritreans have provided arms to insurgents in Somalia as part of a long-standing dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea that includes a series of interlocking proxy wars in the Horn of Africa;

Whereas the United Nations estimates that, as of April 2008, 2,000,000 people in Somalia need humanitarian assistance or livelihood support for at least the next 6 months, including 745,000 people who have fled ongoing insecurity and sporadic violence in Mogadishu over the past 16 months, adding to more than 275,000 long-term internally displaced Somalis;

Whereas, despite Prime Minister Nur Hassan Hussein's public commitment to humanitarian operations, local and international aid agencies remain hindered by extortion, harassment, and administrative obstructions;

Whereas, in March 2008, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon presented his report on Somalia based on recent strategic assessments and fact-finding missions, which offered recommendations for increasing United Nations engagement while decreasing the presence of foreign troops, including the establishment of a maritime task force to deter piracy and support the 1992 international arms embargo;

Whereas the United States Government has allocated nearly \$50,000,000 to support the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and continues to be the leading contributor of humanitarian assistance in Somalia, with approximately \$140,000,000 provided in fiscal year 2007 and fiscal year 2008 to date, but still lacks a comprehensive strategy to build a sustainable peace;

Whereas, over the last 5 years, the Senate has repeatedly called upon the President through resolutions, amendments, bills, oversight letters, and hearings to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to contribute to lasting peace and security throughout the Horn of Africa by helping to establish a legitimate, stable central government in Somalia capable of maintaining the rule of law and preventing Somalia from becoming a safe haven for terrorists;

Whereas a February 2008 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report entitled, "Somalia: Several Challenges Limit U.S. and International Stabilization, Humanitarian, and Development Efforts", found that United States and international "efforts have been limited by lack of security, access to vulnerable populations, and effective government institutions" as well as the fact that the "U.S. strategy for Somalia, outlined in the Administration's 2007 report to Congress on its Comprehensive Regional Strategy on Somalia, is incomplete";

Whereas the recent designation by the Department of State of Somali's al Shabaab militia as a foreign terrorist organization under section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1189) and as a specially designated global terrorist under section 1(b) of Executive Order 13224 (September 23, 2001) highlights the growing need for a strategic, multifaceted, and coordinated approach to Somalia; and

Whereas it is in the interest of the United States, the people of Somalia, and the citizens and governments of neighboring and other interested countries to work towards a legitimate peace and a sustainable resolution to the crisis in Somalia that includes civilian protection and access to services, upholds the rule of law, and promotes accountability: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That it is the sense of the Senate that—

(1) the United States remains committed to the people of Somalia and to helping build the institutions necessary for a stable nation free from civil war and violent extremism;

(2) the President, in partnership with the African Union, the United Nations, and the international community, should—

(A) provide sufficient humanitarian assistance to those most seriously affected by armed conflict, drought, and flooding throughout Somalia, and call on the Transitional Federal Government to actively facilitate the dispersal of such assistance;

(B) ensure accountability for all state, non-state, and external parties responsible for violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in Somalia, including through the deployment of United Nations human rights monitors and the establishment of a United Nations Commission of Inquiry to investigate abuses;

(C) call on all parties to recommit to an inclusive dialogue, with international support, in the interest of promoting sustainable peace and security in Somalia and across the Horn of Africa;

(D) urge the Government of Ethiopia, in coordination with the United Nations Political Office in Somalia, to develop a clear timeline for the responsible withdrawal of its armed forces from Somalia, to honor its obligation under the Geneva Conventions to ensure protection of civilians under its control, and to observe the distinction between civil-

ians and military combatants and their assets;

(E) urge the Government of Eritrea to play a productive role in helping to bring about stability to Somalia, including ceasing to provide any financial and material support, such as arms and ammunition, to insurgent groups in and around Mogadishu and throughout the region; and

(F) call on all countries in the region and wider international community to provide increased support for AMISOM and ensure a robust civilian protection mandate;

(3) to achieve sustainable peace in the region, the Transitional Federal Government, including the newly appointed Prime Minister and his Cabinet, should—

(A) take necessary steps to protect civilians from dangers related to military operations, investigate and prosecute human rights abuses, provide basic services to all the people of Somalia, and ensure that humanitarian organizations have full access to vulnerable populations;

(B) recommit to the Transitional Federal Charter;

(C) set a detailed timeline and demonstrate observable progress for completing the political transition laid out in the Transitional Federal Charter by 2009, including concrete and immediate steps toward scheduling elections as a means of establishing a democratically elected government that represents the people of Somalia; and

(D) agree to participate in an inclusive and transparent political process, with international support, towards the formation of a government of national unity based on the principles of democracy, accountability, and the rule of law.

RECOGNIZING CUBA SOLIDARITY DAY

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to S. Res. 573.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 573) recognizing Cuba Solidarity Day and the struggle of the Cuban people as they continue to fight for freedom.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

CUBA SOLIDARITY DAY

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I and my colleagues wish to commemorate Cuba Solidarity Day and the struggle of the Cuban people against a constant denial of their basic liberties. Yesterday, we marked the day in 1902 when Cuba won its independence from Spain. Yesterday, we celebrated the birth of their nation; today, we express our hope that the island will experience a new birth of freedom. Today, we express our solidarity with Cuba's political prisoners, democracy advocates, and human rights activists who risk their lives so that freedom might live.

About 6 months ago I spoke on the Senate floor with my colleague, Senator MARTINEZ, to express outrage that 70 Cuban dissidents were arrested, detained, and harassed. These 70 Cubans, according to the Cuban regime, had committed the crime of peaceful assembly.

These young people were simply walking down a street in Havana. And while they were peacefully walking, they had on their arms this wristband. The simple white wristband says one word; "cambio".

Unfortunately, as we have seen for decades from this regime, this denial of a basic liberty was not an isolated incident.

This regime has been marked by fear and repression for decades. For decades, they have denied freedom of press, freedom of speech and freedom to peacefully assemble.

They have refused to hold free and fair elections which represent the will of the Cuban people.

They have denied the most basic human rights to its citizens.

But decades of fear and repression have also led to acts of courage.

And I stand here today in solidarity with all of the brave Cubans who have shown such acts of courage.

Currently, according to Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and Reporters Without Borders, the Cuban regime is holding more than 220 political prisoners.

These heroes continue to sacrifice and fight so that one day the Cuban people will finally know freedom.

We in the Senate recently introduced a resolution to award a Congressional Gold Medal to Dr. Oscar Elias Biscet, in recognition of his courageous and unwavering commitment to democracy, human rights, and peaceful change in Cuba.

Dr. Biscet's fight serves as an example to all Cubans as well as a source of inspiration for us here.

Dr. Biscet, the hundreds of political prisoners and all Cubans who live with daily political repression have shown that Cuba will change. And this change will come from the Cuban people.

But they need our help. We must continue to fight here to do what we can to empower them. And we must continue to acknowledge them when they empower themselves.

Mr. ENSIGN. Mr. President, I rise in support of this resolution to recognize Cuba Solidarity Day and the struggle of the Cuban people as they continue to fight for freedom. Cuba Solidarity Day is a call for the world to join together in the fight against oppression in Cuba. It is a way of drawing attention to the injustices faced by the people of Cuba under the current regime and a way of saying that our country stands together with the Cuban people as they work toward democratic change.

I believe that it is our country's duty to push for a peaceful transition to democracy in Cuba. It is a travesty that, more than a decade after the Cold War ended, a brutal communist dictator is still oppressing people just miles off the coast of Florida.

The people of Cuba continue to be denied the most basic human rights and the freedoms of speech, press, and assembly. It is estimated that more than