

Hezbollah, a State Department-designated foreign terrorist organization. According to the Congressional Research Center, Hezbollah, along with Iran, has been linked to two bombings against Jewish targets in Argentina—the 1972 bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires that killed 30 people and the 1994 bombing of the Argentine-Israeli Mutual Association in Buenos Aires that killed 85 people.

While increasing tensions between the United States, Israel, and Iran, we cannot simply afford to ignore the threats that are looming in South America. The Countering Iran in the Western Hemisphere Act of 2012 will ensure that threat assessments are conducted, that a cooperative strategy is put in place between the United States and her allies in the region, and our borders with Canada and Mexico are more secure. These efforts will allow our country to better protect our citizens and our interests both on our own soil and abroad.

As we have seen, the threat is real and American lives are at stake. We cannot afford to ignore the potential threats to our national security that may stem from this area of the world.

Mr. ENGEL. At this time, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH).

Mr. KUCINICH. I condemn all the violence that has been talked about here, and I also had the opportunity years ago to visit the synagogue in Buenos Aires that was the subject of that attack, and I paid my respects.

I want to say that as I've heard this debate, there are two things that occur to me: number one, Congress has a right to ask for reports. It's our constitutional obligation to find out what the administration is doing. I support Congress' right to get information. But at the same time, when the debate takes us in a direction to where suddenly we're at odds with Latin America, it is an argument for Congress to take a strong stand for diplomacy. I hope that as we get these reports, that we're going to underscore the importance of diplomacy not only with respect to Latin America, but also with respect to Iran. The American people do not want another war, and we need diplomacy to take us in a direction that makes war not likely.

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

Mr. ENGEL. I also yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I rise to offer my strong support to H.R. 3783, Countering Iran in the Western Hemisphere Act, which provides for a comprehensive strategy to counter Iran's growing presence and hostile activity in the Western Hemisphere. I would also like to thank the gentleman from South Carolina, Mr. JEFF DUNCAN, for introducing this legislation highlighting the very real threat of Iran at America's front door.

If we have learned anything from the complete lack of progress in negotiations to keep

Iran from making a nuclear weapon, it is that Iran is persistent in hostile action and insistent on establishing itself as a counterweight to U.S. power and ideals.

Iran has engaged the U.S. through its Iran Revolutionary Guard Corp (IGRC) in Iraq, resulting in the deaths of American men and service women. Iran is buttressing the morally bankrupt Assad regime in Syria as Syria massacres its own people. And Iran is attacking our friends and allies through its proxies, like Hezbollah, which boasts and arsenal of 60 to 70,000 rockets, many of which were supplied by Iran and are aimed at Israeli neighborhoods.

Iran has earned its title as a state sponsor of terrorism. No target is off limits, and simply being of Jewish descent is apparently provocation enough. In 1994, Iran orchestrated one of the worst terrorist attacks in the Western Hemisphere against the AMIA Jewish Community Center in Buenos Aires, murdering 85 people and injuring 300 more. The peace of 200,000 Jewish individuals, many of whom fled to Argentina during WWII, was shattered by this barbarous attack.

Media reports over the last few years have shown an alarming trend of increased Iranian IGRC Qods force presence and activity in Latin America. Iran's President Ahmadinejad, famous for his repeated denials of the Holocaust and dedication to wiping Israel off the map, has made visits to Latin America to cultivate alliances with Chavez, Ortega, Morales, Castro, and Correa.

These leaders have stated their commitment to Iran's nuclear activities and their faith that "Iran can give a crushing response to the threats and sanctions imposed by the West and imperialism." There is no question that Bolivia, Cuba, Ecuador, Nicaragua, and Venezuela are helping Iran evade the sanctions intended to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear sponsor of state terrorism. The question is, what are we doing about it?

If Iran succeeds in creating a nuclear weapon, it is all too conceivable that these allies of Iran in the Western Hemisphere would be willing to provide a local launch pad, as Cuba did during the Cold War for Russian missiles aimed at the U.S.

Mr. Speaker, these threats are all too real and all too proximate. With H.R. 3783, the Administration will be required to create a coordinated, inter-agency plan to ensure that the United States is working effectively to counter Iran's hostile aspirations in the Western Hemisphere. I urge my colleagues to support this important and timely legislation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3783, as amended.

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

The title was amended so as to read: "A bill to provide for a comprehensive strategy to counter Iran's growing hostile presence and activity in the Western Hemisphere, and for other purposes."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1510

EXPRESSING SENSE OF HOUSE TOWARD ESTABLISHMENT OF A DEMOCRATIC AND PROSPEROUS REPUBLIC OF GEORGIA

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 526) expressing the sense of the House of Representatives with respect toward the establishment of a democratic and prosperous Republic of Georgia and the establishment of a peaceful and just resolution to the conflict with Georgia's internationally recognized borders, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 526

Whereas a democratic and stable Republic of Georgia is in the political, security, and economic interests of the United States;

Whereas the security of the Black Sea and South Caucasus region is important for Euro-Atlantic security, transportation, and energy diversification to and from Central Asia;

Whereas Georgia has been a reliable partner and ally in enhancing global peace and stability with its significant contribution to operations in Iraq and Afghanistan;

Whereas the United States-Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership, signed in January 2009, outlines the importance of the bilateral relationship as well as the intent of both countries to expand democracy and economic programs, enhance defense and security cooperation, further trade and energy cooperation, and build people-to-people cultural exchanges;

Whereas in October 2010, at the meeting of the United States-Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton stated, "the United States will not waver in its support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity";

Whereas successive United States Administrations have supported Georgia's aspirations to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO);

Whereas it was declared by the Heads of State and Government participating in the 2008 NATO Summit in Bucharest, and reaffirmed in 2009 at the Summit in Strasbourg and Kehl and in 2010 at the Summit in Lisbon, that Georgia is a NATO aspirant country, and will become a member of NATO;

Whereas the North Atlantic Council Foreign Ministers, meeting on December 7, 2011, applauded the significant operational support provided to NATO by aspirant partners Georgia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina;

Whereas the August 2008, military conflict between Russia and Georgia resulted in civilian and military casualties, the violation of Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and increased the number of internally displaced persons there;

Whereas large numbers of the Georgian population remain forcefully displaced from the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions of Georgia as a result of the August 2008 military conflict as well as the earlier conflicts in the 1990s;

Whereas since 1993, the territorial integrity of Georgia has been reaffirmed by the international community in 36 United Nations Security Council resolutions;

Whereas the August 12, 2008, ceasefire agreement negotiated by the European

Union Presidency and agreed to by the Presidents of Georgia and the Russian Federation, provides that all Russian troops shall be withdrawn to pre-conflict positions;

Whereas the Russian Federation opposed consensus on the extension of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Mission to Georgia, vetoed the extension of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) and blocked the work of the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) in the occupied Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia;

Whereas the United States supports Georgia's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity within the internationally recognized borders of Georgia;

Whereas Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton stated in Tbilisi on July 5, 2010, that, "We continue to call for Russia to abide by the August 2008 ceasefire commitment. . . including ending the occupation and withdrawing Russian troops from South Ossetia and Abkhazia to their pre-conflict positions";

Whereas the White House released a Fact Sheet on July 24, 2010, calling for "Russia to end its occupation of the Georgian territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. . ." and for "a return of international observers to the two occupied regions of Georgia";

Whereas Vice President Joseph Biden stated in Tbilisi in July 2009 that the United States "will not recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states";

Whereas Human Rights Watch concluded in its 2011 World Report that "Russia continued to exercise effective control over South Ossetia and Abkhazia, preventing international observers' access and vetoing international missions working there";

Whereas Human Rights Watch concluded in its 2011 World Report that "Russia continued to occupy Georgia's breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and strengthened its military presence in the region by establishing a military base and placing an advanced surface-to-air missile system in Abkhazia";

Whereas the Senate of the 112th United States Congress adopted a resolution in July 2011 affirming the United States' support for the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of the country of Georgia and calling upon Russia to remove its occupying forces from Abkhazia and South Ossetia;

Whereas the United States Helsinki Commission called Russia to cease its continuing, illegal occupation of the South Ossetia and Abkhazia regions of Georgia and allow those who fled their homes during the 2008 war to go back without preconditions;

Whereas the Russian Federation therefore remains in violation of August 12, 2008, ceasefire agreement;

Whereas at the April 15, 2011, meeting in Berlin, Germany, between the Georgia foreign minister and foreign ministers of NATO, Secretary of State Clinton stated, "U.S. support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity remains steadfast. . . . We share Georgian concerns regarding recent Russian activities that can negatively affect regional stability.";

Whereas on November 23, 2010, Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili committed before the European Parliament that "Georgia will never use force to restore its territorial integrity and sovereignty";

Whereas the Government of Georgia, beginning with the Rose Revolution of 2003, has taken significant steps toward promoting democratic and economic reforms;

Whereas in October 2012, Georgia will hold its seventh parliamentary elections since the country gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, and prospective presi-

dential elections in 2013 to which the Government of Georgia has invited international election observers;

Whereas Georgia has initiated positive developments and commitments in the areas of constitutional reforms, strengthening the role of Parliament, and utilizing international election organizations and transparency;

Whereas the Head of the OSCE/ODIHR long-term Election Observation Mission determined that Georgia's May 2010 municipal elections "were marked by clear improvements and efforts by the authorities to address problems occurring during the process. It is now time to fix the remaining shortcomings and take effective steps to prevent electoral malpractices before the next elections at the national level."; and

Whereas recognizing that members of NATO share a common adherence to democratic norms, Georgia can best prepare itself for membership by progressing on its democratic reform agenda and ensuring that upcoming parliamentary and presidential elections are free, fair, and competitive: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) supports strengthened United States engagements with the Republic of Georgia aimed at helping Georgia enhance its security and to restore its territorial integrity through exclusively peaceful means;

(2) supports the implementation of the United States-Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership, with a mutual desire to strengthen the bilateral relationship across political, economic, trade, energy, cultural, scientific, people-to-people, defense, and security fields;

(3) supports Georgia's North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) membership aspirations and to advance further implementation of decisions taken by the allies at the NATO Summits in Bucharest, Strasbourg and Kehl, and Lisbon with regard to Georgia's NATO membership;

(4) affirms that it is the policy of the United States to support the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of Georgia and the inviolability of its borders, and to recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia as regions of Georgia illegally occupied by the Russian Federation and calls on the Russian Federation to fulfill all terms and conditions of the August 12, 2008, ceasefire agreement, to end the occupation of the Georgian territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and to withdraw completely its troops from the internationally recognized border of Georgia;

(5) calls upon the Russian Federation, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Tuvalu, and Nauru to reverse the recognition of the occupied Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent and respect the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders;

(6) supports the Government of Georgia's commitment to a policy of peaceful, constructive engagement and confidence building measures towards the occupied territories and encourages it to continue to uphold economic and human rights, ensure freedom of movement, facilitate people-to-people contacts, and to preserve cultural heritage, language, and ethnic identity aimed at reconciling divided communities of the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia;

(7) urges the Government of Russia and the authorities in control in the regions to allow for the full and dignified, secure, and voluntary return of internally displaced persons and international missions access to the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia;

(8) recognizes progress on government transparency and economic reforms and encourages Georgia to continue strengthening its democracy by implementing reforms that expand media transparency and freedoms, increase government transparency, accountability, and responsiveness, promote political competition and democratic electoral processes, strengthen the rule of law and judicial independence, and further implement judicial reforms; and

(9) affirms that a peaceful resolution to the conflict is a key priority for the United States in the Caucasus region, and that lasting regional stability can only be achieved through peaceful means and long-term diplomatic and political dialogue between all parties.

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

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to insert extraneous material into the RECORD on this measure.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida?

There was no objection.

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

In the last decade, the Republic of Georgia has worked hard to implement a series of political, economic, and social reform aimed at establishing a democratic and prosperous society. These changes have often been difficult and even controversial, but the Georgian Government and its people must be commended for continuing to move forward. However, there is still much to be done.

Soon, in the next few months, there will be parliamentary and presidential elections. Much is riding on these elections being perceived to be free and fair and conducted in full compliance with international democratic standards. The U.S. strongly supports Georgia's membership in NATO, and the alliance has repeatedly stated that the Republic of Georgia will one day be welcomed as a full member.

Free and fair elections, Mr. Speaker, are fundamental to further progress toward Georgia's joining NATO. Nevertheless, Georgia is already contributing greatly to the alliance, particularly to the NATO mission in Afghanistan, where it is the second largest non-NATO contributor.

Georgia's deployed forces in Afghanistan number over 800 troops, and these do not have restrictions on their engagement in combat, which is not the case with so many other allies. Georgia has done this even as its own security situation remains precarious, given the ongoing presence by Russian troops in several regions in Georgia.

Until Russia fulfills the conditions in its 2008 cease-fire agreement, the instability and conflict it has deliberately

created will, unfortunately, continue. Russia's aggression against Georgia poses a threat to the security of the entire region. This resolution, therefore, sends a strong message that Russian actions and continued military presence in these areas are unacceptable and must end immediately.

I therefore urge my colleagues to join me in support of this important resolution.

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

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in strong support of H. Res. 526, and I would like to thank the sponsors of this legislation, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SHUSTER) and my colleague from the Foreign Affairs Committee, Ms. SCHWARTZ, also from Pennsylvania, for their leadership on this issue.

This resolution expresses the sense of the House of Representatives with respect to the establishment of the democratic and prosperous Republic of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders, which includes Abkhazia and South Ossetia as regions of Georgia. It is time for Russia to remove its occupying forces from Abkhazia and South Ossetia and comply fully with the August 12, 2008, cease-fire agreement. It is also time for the Russian Federation, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Tuvalu, and Nauru to revoke their recognition of the Georgian regions as independent states and respect Georgia's sovereignty. The territorial integrity of Georgia has been reaffirmed by the international community multiple times in United Nations Security Council resolutions.

I commend Georgia for its commitment to a peaceful reunification of its territories and its engagement in constructive confidence-building measures towards the occupied territories aimed at reconnecting the divided communities.

Georgia has had success in laying the foundation for a liberal, democratic state, and I urge the Government of Georgia to consolidate its impressive accomplishments since the 2003 Rose Revolution. The reforms needed to strengthen Georgia's nascent democracy are well-known: an independent judiciary, respect for human rights and the rule of law, a vibrant civil society, independent media, accountable and transparent policymaking, and a balance of power between the executive and legislative branches. These reforms will be the strongest guarantor of Georgia's independence and prosperity.

Ahead of us, the October 1 parliamentary elections can serve as yet another important benchmark of the deepening democratic process in Georgia. These will be followed by presidential elections. A step backwards would not only be a blow to the development of Georgia's democracy but, ultimately, to its independence.

There have been some disturbing reports concerning efforts to prevent

some political leaders from running in the parliamentary election and attempts to intimidate local opposition, including denying them access to media. These issues must be addressed in order to ensure that Georgia has truly free and fair elections.

With this resolution today, we affirm that the United States remains committed to the sanctity of Georgia's sovereignty and independence and to the inviolability of its federation and its internationally recognized borders. We also remind Georgia of the opportunity it has next month to solidify Georgia's democracy by ensuring free and fair elections.

Let me say, on a personal note, that I am very proud of the relationship between the United States and Georgia, and I would look forward to a day when Georgia is a member of the European Union and also a member of NATO. I think that the West must not overlook its commitments in Georgia simply because we may wish to have better relations with Russia.

We can never cast aside democratic principles because they happen to be inconvenient at the time. We should stand with the nation of Georgia and let the world know, including Russia, that we stand by their democracy and will not allow any slipping backwards and will not allow Russian hegemony in the area.

We stand by a free and independent Georgia, so I urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SHUSTER), who is the chairman of the Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous Materials, a member of the Armed Services Committee, and, more importantly, the author of the measure before us.

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of House Resolution 526, which expresses the sense of the House of Representatives toward the establishment of a democratic and prosperous Republic of Georgia and the establishment of a peaceful and just resolution to the conflict with Georgia's internationally recognized borders. I also want to stand with the ranking member for his support of Georgia. We need to stand by a democratic Georgia, a great ally of ours.

As the cochair of the Congressional Georgia Caucus, I was proud to sponsor this resolution along with my cochair and fellow Pennsylvanian, Congresswoman ALLYSON SCHWARTZ.

Our strategic partnership with Georgia is based on shared values and common interests. A democratic and stable Republic of Georgia is in the political security and economic interests of the United States.

Georgian troops have played an important role in a variety of challenging missions across the globe, including Kosovo, Iraq, and today in Afghani-

stan. In fact, they just brought home 900 Georgian troops and are going to re-up with 1700 troops.

While that doesn't seem like a lot, 1,700, when we have over 80,000, but when you look at a small country like Georgia with 5 million people, sending 1,700 troops is the equivalent of the United States of America sending over 100,000 troops. They have proven to be a reliable ally.

The level of their professionalism, as well as their sacrifices in the mission in which they have been involved so far, clearly demonstrates that Georgia has much to bring to the table as a future member of NATO and as a reliable ally.

Internally, Georgia has worked to develop its democratic and market-based economic institutions for over a decade.

The August 2008 war with Russia nearly halted the economic development, depleted public resources, drove up unemployment, and left a severe humanitarian crisis in its wake. A peaceful resolution to the conflict is a key priority for the United States in the Caucasus region, which is home to another one of our strong allies, Azerbaijan. Lasting regional stability can only be achieved through peaceful means and long-term diplomatic and political dialogue between all the parties.

□ 1520

It is also timely that we consider this resolution today, as Georgia is scheduled to hold parliamentary elections on October 1. Georgia has put a robust system in place to support a free and fair electoral process. These elections will be an important test to Georgia's democracy and represent a chance for all Georgians to show the world how far they have come in this last decade.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this important resolution today to express our support for one of our best and most important allies, the Republic of Georgia.

Mr. ENGEL. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Let me say in conclusion I am glad that we have cooperation, as we generally do, in the Foreign Affairs Committee for working together on these issues. But I just want to say that I wish we had more cooperation in working together on some of the other issues of the day.

We are leaving town in 2 days without enacting into law middle class tax cuts, the farm bill, the Violence Against Women Act, a responsible deficit reduction. Those are the priorities that are urgent, and we should be working on them right now in a bipartisan way—the way we are working on these issues. The American people cannot afford a Congress that refuses to act on issues critical to middle class families, small businesses, farmers, and women. So I just want to urge the Republican leadership to let us stay in

town and complete work and work together for the betterment of the American people, the way we are doing with these three resolutions.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.

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

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to support H. Res. 526, which calls for the establishment of a democratic and prosperous Republic of Georgia and a peaceful and just resolution of Georgia's conflict with its breakaway regions, Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Our country has always backed Georgia's territorial integrity. After Russia's 2008 invasion of Georgia, Moscow essentially truncated Georgia by recognizing the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Tellingly, no other OSCE state—not even former Soviet republics economically dependent on Russia—has followed Moscow's example, understanding well the danger of the precedent. Secretary Clinton has designated Russia's policy in Abkhazia and South Ossetia as "occupation." Indeed, Moscow has pursued the ongoing militarization of these regions, which are clearly Georgian territory.

In a remarkable admission, Russian President Vladimir Putin said on August 8 that Russia had a contingency plan as early as 2006–2007 for war with Georgia and that Moscow had even trained militiamen in South Ossetia. As Georgia's Foreign Ministry notes, Putin's acknowledgement contradicts "Russia's earlier assertions that its 2008 military attack was in response to a surprise attack from Georgia and that its invasion was meant to prevent genocide and protect Russian citizens. It also underscores the premeditated nature of the invasion and highlights Moscow's utter disregard for international law."

The United States will continue to back Georgia's territorial integrity. I stand with Georgia's Government in calling on Russia to remove its occupying forces and pledge not to use force against Georgia. I also note with concern the troubling military exercises Russia has scheduled to coincide with Georgia's parliamentary elections in October in a blatant attempt at intimidation.

The upcoming election will be a critical moment in Georgia's democratic development. I hope the OSCE will be able to assess the election as free and fair. The United States stands ready to help Georgia progress towards democracy, as H. Res. 526 demonstrates.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 526, 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.

CONFIRMING FULL OWNERSHIP RIGHTS TO ARTIFACTS FROM ASTRONAUTS' SPACE MISSIONS

Mr. HALL. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill

(H.R. 4158) to confirm full ownership rights for certain United States astronauts to artifacts from the astronauts' space missions.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4158

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. DEFINITION OF ARTIFACT.

For purposes of this Act, the term "artifact" means, with respect to an astronaut described in section 2(a), any expendable item utilized in missions for the Mercury, Gemini, or Apollo programs through the completion of the Apollo-Soyuz Test Project not expressly required to be returned to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration at the completion of the mission and other expendable, disposable, or personal-use items utilized by such astronaut during participation in any such program. The term includes personal logs, checklists, flight manuals, prototype and proof test articles used in training, and disposable flight hardware salvaged from jettisoned lunar modules. The term does not include lunar rocks and other lunar material.

SEC. 2. FULL OWNERSHIP OF ARTIFACTS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—A United States astronaut who participated in any of the Mercury, Gemini, or Apollo programs through the completion of the Apollo-Soyuz Test Project, who received an artifact during his participation in any such program, shall have full ownership of and clear title to such artifact.

(b) NO FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CLAIM.—The Federal Government shall have no claim or right to ownership, control, or use of any artifact in possession of an astronaut as described in subsection (a) or any such artifact that was subsequently transferred, sold, or assigned to a third party by an astronaut described in subsection (a).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HALL) and the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HALL. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on H.R. 4158, the bill now under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. HALL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I want to begin by thanking members of the Science, Space, and Technology Committee, Republicans and Democrats, for their bipartisan support of this legislation. I especially want to commend my good friends LAMAR SMITH and EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON for their help and for their early support.

H.R. 4158 would confirm full ownership rights to our Nation's first generation of astronauts who flew during the Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo era and who received or were allowed to retain artifacts, mementos, and other personal equipment from their missions. H.R. 4158 covers all flights beginning in

1961 through the Apollo-Soyuz Test Project, which flew in July of 1975.

From the first days of our manned spaceflight program through the Apollo-Soyuz Test Project, at the conclusion of a mission NASA managers routinely allowed astronauts to keep mementos of their flights. In some instances, astronauts were also given certain pieces of expendable equipment. The range of items included space suit emblems, expendable space suits, checklists, flight manuals, and disposable flight hardware salvaged from the jettisoned lunar landers.

A majority of these items have been in the personal possession of the astronauts for 40 years or more. Over the last decade, NASA has begun to challenge the astronauts' ownership of these mementos. This issue was first brought to my attention late last year. I was surprised to learn that NASA had, on an irregular basis, intervened several times to claim ownership.

Early this year, NASA Administrator Bolden met with a small group of astronauts to discuss the agency's artifacts policy. Following the meeting, through NASA's press office, Administrator Bolden issued a statement saying:

These are American heroes, fellow astronauts, and personal friends who have acted in good faith, and we have committed to work together to find the right policy.

He went on to say:

I believe there have been fundamental misunderstandings and unclear policies regarding items from the Mercury, Gemini, Apollo, and Skylab programs, and NASA appreciates the position of the astronauts, museums, learning institutions, and others who have these historic artifacts in personal and private collections.

This bill seeks to eliminate in any further ambiguity about Apollo-era artifacts that were received by the astronauts. It simply says that astronauts who flew through the end of the Apollo program will be granted full right of ownership of any artifacts received from their missions. If we don't pass this bill, the artifacts and the astronauts face huge financial risks arising from donations, gifts, and sales already completed.

These men are heroes. They're great heroes. Sadly, we had to say good-bye to one of these heroes just last week. They took extraordinary risks to establish American preeminence in space and, by doing so, helped our country become a world leader. I think it's a miscarriage of justice that today NASA should seek return of these very same mementos and keepsakes.

I reserve the balance of my time.

[From NASA News, Jan. 9, 2012]

NASA ADMINISTRATOR MEETS WITH APOLLO ASTRONAUTS; AGENCY WILL WORK COOPERATIVELY TO RESOLVE ARTIFACT OWNERSHIP ISSUES

(By David Weaver and Bob Jacobs)

WASHINGTON, DC.—The following is a statement from NASA Administrator Charles Bolden regarding the ownership of early space exploration mementos and artifacts:

"Earlier today, I had a good meeting with former Apollo astronauts Jim Lovell, Gene