

as the "Staff Sergeant Nicholas J. Reid Post Office Building";

H.R. 2391, to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 5323 Highway N in Cottleville, Missouri as the "Lance Corporal Phillip Vinnedge Post Office";

H.R. 2939, to award the Congressional Gold Medal to Shimon Peres;

H.R. 3060, to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 232 Southwest Johnson Avenue in Burleson, Texas, as the "Sergeant William Moody Post Office Building";

H.R. 4032, to exempt from Lacey Act Amendments of 1981 certain water transfers by the North Texas Municipal Water District and the Greater Texoma Utility Authority, and for other purposes;

H.R. 4488, to make technical corrections to two bills enabling the presentation of congressional gold medals, and for other purposes.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until approximately 4 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 2 o'clock and 12 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1600

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. JOLLY) at 4 p.m.

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 incurs objection under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later.

VENEZUELAN HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY PROTECTION ACT

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4587) to impose targeted sanctions on individuals responsible for carrying out or ordering human rights abuses against the citizens of Venezuela, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4587

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Venezuelan Human Rights and Democracy Protection Act".

SEC. 2. DEFINITION.

In this Act, the term "appropriate congressional committees" means—

(1) the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Committee on Financial Services, the Com-

mittee on the Judiciary, and the Committee on Ways and Means of the House of Representatives; and

(2) the Committee on Foreign Relations, the Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs, and the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate.

SEC. 3. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) On February 12, 2014, also known in Venezuela as the National Youth Day, students began protesting in several cities against Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro's inability to stem violent crime, his undemocratic actions, and a rapidly deteriorating economy marked by high inflation and shortages of consumer goods.

(2) On February 12, 2014, a judge issued an arrest warrant for Leopoldo López, leader of the opposition party Voluntad Popular, for allegations in connection with the student protests.

(3) On February 17, 2014, the Government of Venezuela notified the United States Department of State that it had declared 3 consular officers at the United States Embassy in Venezuela *personae non gratae*.

(4) On February 18, 2014, opposition leader Leopoldo López turned himself in to Venezuelan authorities, was arrested, and charged with criminal incitement, conspiracy, arson, and intent to damage property.

(5) Leopoldo López is currently being held in a prison at a military facility.

(6) Nongovernmental human rights organizations have alleged that the charges brought against Leopoldo López appear to be a politically motivated attempt to silence dissent in the country.

(7) As of May 1, 2014, there have been 41 people killed, a reported 60 cases of torture, over 100 injured, and many oppressively detained in relation to pro-democracy demonstrations throughout Venezuela.

(8) On February 19, 2014, President Obama criticized the Government of Venezuela for arresting protesters, called for their release, and urged the government to focus on the "legitimate grievances of the Venezuelan people".

(9) According to the Department of State's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013 for Venezuela, "The principal human rights abuses reported during the year included corruption, politicization in the judicial system, and government actions to impede freedom of expression and restrict freedom of the press. The government did not respect judicial independence or permit judges to act according to the law without fear of retaliation. The government used the judiciary to intimidate and selectively prosecute political, union, business, and civil society leaders who were critical of government policies or actions. The government harassed and intimidated privately owned television stations, other media outlets, and journalists throughout the year, using threats, fines, property seizures, targeted regulations, arrests, and criminal investigations and prosecutions."

(10) According to the Department of State's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013 for Venezuela, "The following human rights problems were reported by NGOs, the media, and in some cases the government itself: unlawful killings, including summary killings by police elements; torture and other cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions and lack of due process rights that contributed to widespread violence, riots, injuries, and deaths in prisons; inadequate juvenile detention centers; arbitrary arrests and detentions; corruption and impunity in police forces; political prisoners;

interference with privacy rights; corruption at all levels of government; threats against domestic NGOs; violence against women; anti-Semitism in the official media; trafficking in persons; violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity; and restrictions on workers' right of association."

(11) According to Freedom House's Freedom in the World report of 2013 on Venezuela, "Nicolás Maduro, further weakened the independent media, reduced the opposition's ability to serve as a check on government policy, and made threats to civil society groups."

SEC. 4. ACTIONS AT THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES.

The Secretary of State shall direct the United States Permanent Representative to the Organization of American States to use the voice, vote, and influence of the United States at the Organization of American States to defend and protect the Inter-American Democratic Charter, and strengthen efforts by international and multilateral organizations to advance the protection of human rights throughout the Western Hemisphere, especially in Venezuela.

SEC. 5. SANCTIONS ON PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR VIOLENCE IN VENEZUELA.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The President shall impose the sanctions described in subsection (b)(1)(A) and the Secretary of State or the Secretary of Homeland Security (or a designee of one of such Secretaries) shall impose the sanctions described in subsection (b)(1)(B) with respect to any person, including a current or former official of the Government of Venezuela or a person acting on behalf of that Government, that the President, or the Secretary of State or the Secretary of Homeland Security (or a designee of one of such Secretaries), as the case may be, determines—

(1) has perpetrated, or is responsible for ordering, controlling, or otherwise directing, significant acts of violence or serious human rights abuses in Venezuela against individuals participating in protests in Venezuela that began on February 12, 2014;

(2) has directed or ordered the arrest or prosecution of a person primarily because of the person's legitimate exercise of freedom of expression or assembly in relation to the protests in Venezuela that began on February 12, 2014;

(3) has knowingly materially assisted, sponsored, or provided significant financial, material, or technological support for, or goods or services in support of, the commission of acts described in paragraph (1) or (2) in relation to protests in Venezuela that began on February 12, 2014; or

(4) has engaged in censorship against individuals or media outlets disseminating information in relation to protests in Venezuela that began on February 12, 2014.

(b) SANCTIONS DESCRIBED.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The sanctions described in this subsection are the following:

(A) ASSET BLOCKING.—

(i) IN GENERAL.—The exercise of all powers granted to the President by the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.) to the extent necessary to block and prohibit all transactions in all property and interests in property of a person determined by the President to be subject to subsection (a) if such property and interests in property are in the United States, come within the United States, or are or come within the possession or control of a United States person.

(ii) EXCEPTION.—

(I) IN GENERAL.—The authority to impose sanctions under clause (i) shall not include

the authority to impose sanctions relating to the importation of goods.

(II) **GOOD DEFINED.**—In subclause (I), the term “good” has the meaning given that term in section 16 of the Export Administration Act of 1979 (50 U.S.C. App. 2415) (as continued in effect pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 et. seq.)).

(B) **ALIENS INELIGIBLE FOR VISAS, ADMISSION, OR PAROLE.**—

(i) **VISAS, ADMISSION, OR PAROLE.**—An alien who the Secretary of State or the Secretary of Homeland Security (or a designee of one of such Secretaries) knows or has reasonable grounds to believe meets any of the criteria described in subsection (a) is—

(I) inadmissible to the United States;

(II) ineligible to receive a visa or other documentation to enter the United States; and

(III) otherwise ineligible to be admitted or paroled into the United States or to receive any other benefit under the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101 et seq.).

(ii) **CURRENT VISAS REVOKED.**—

(I) **IN GENERAL.**—The issuing consular officer, the Secretary of State, or the Secretary of Homeland Security (or a designee of one of such Secretaries) shall revoke any visa or other entry documentation issued to an alien who meets any of the criteria described in subsection (a), regardless of when issued.

(II) **EFFECT OF REVOCATION.**—A revocation under subclause (I) shall take effect immediately; and shall automatically cancel any other valid visa or entry documentation that is in the alien's possession.

(2) **PENALTIES.**—A person that is subject to sanctions described in paragraph (1)(A) shall be subject to the penalties set forth in subsections (b) and (c) of section 206 of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1705) to the same extent as a person that commits an unlawful act described in subsection (a) of that section.

(3) **EXCEPTION TO COMPLY WITH UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS AGREEMENT.**—Sanctions under paragraph (1)(B) shall not apply to an alien if admitting the alien into the United States is necessary to permit the United States to comply with the Agreement regarding the Headquarters of the United Nations, signed at Lake Success June 26, 1947, and entered into force November 21, 1947, between the United Nations and the United States, or other applicable international obligations.

(c) **WAIVER.**—The President may waive the application of sanctions under subsection (b) with respect to a person if the President—

(1) determines that such a waiver is in the national interests of the United States and on or before the date on which the waiver takes effect, submits to the appropriate congressional committees a notice of and justification for the waiver; or

(2) determines that the conditions in Venezuela have improved with regard to respect for peaceful protest and basic human rights and on or before the date on which the waiver takes effect, submits to the appropriate congressional committees a notice of and justification for the waiver.

(d) **IMPLEMENTATION AUTHORITY.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The President may exercise all authorities provided to the President under sections 203 and 205 of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1702 and 1704) for purposes of carrying out this section.

(2) **EXCEPTION.**—

(A) **IN GENERAL.**—The authority to impose sanctions under paragraph (1) shall not include the authority to impose sanctions relating to the importation of goods.

(B) **GOOD DEFINED.**—In subparagraph (A), the term “good” has the meaning given that

term in section 16 of the Export Administration Act of 1979 (50 U.S.C. App. 2415) (as continued in effect pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 et. seq.)).

(e) **REGULATORY AUTHORITY.**—The President shall issue such regulations, licenses, and orders as are necessary to carry out this section.

(f) **DEFINITIONS.**—In this section:

(1) **ADMITTED; ALIEN.**—The terms “admitted” and “alien” have meanings given those terms in section 101 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101).

(2) **MATERIALLY ASSISTED.**—The term “materially assisted” means the provision of assistance that is significant and of a kind directly relevant to acts described in paragraph (1) or (2) of subsection (a).

(3) **UNITED STATES PERSON.**—The term “United States person” means—

(A) a United States citizen or an alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence to the United States; or

(B) an entity organized under the laws of the United States or of any jurisdiction within the United States, including a foreign branch of such an entity.

SEC. 6. IMPOSITION OF SANCTIONS WITH RESPECT TO THE TRANSFER OF GOODS OR TECHNOLOGIES TO VENEZUELA THAT ARE LIKELY TO BE USED TO COMMIT HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—The President shall impose sanctions described in section 5(b) with respect to each person on the list required under subsection (b) of this section.

(b) **LIST.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the President shall transmit to the appropriate congressional committees a list of persons who the President determines have knowingly engaged in an activity described in paragraph (2) on or after such date of enactment.

(2) **ACTIVITY DESCRIBED.**—

(A) **IN GENERAL.**—A person knowingly engages in an activity described in this paragraph if the person—

(i) transfers, or facilitates the transfer of, goods or technologies described in subparagraph (C) to Venezuela, any person organized under the laws of Venezuela, or any national of Venezuela, for use in or with respect to Venezuela; or

(ii) provides services (including services relating to hardware, software, and specialized information, and professional consulting, engineering, and support services) with respect to goods or technologies described in subparagraph (C) after such goods or technologies are transferred to Venezuela.

(B) **APPLICABILITY TO CONTRACTS AND OTHER AGREEMENTS.**—A person engages in an activity described in subparagraph (A) without regard to whether the activity is carried out pursuant to a contract or other agreement entered into before, on, or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(C) **GOODS OR TECHNOLOGIES DESCRIBED.**—

(i) **IN GENERAL.**—Goods or technologies described in this subparagraph are goods or technologies that the President determines are to be used by the Government of Venezuela or any of the agencies or instrumentalities of the Government of Venezuela (or by any other person on behalf of the Government of Venezuela or any of such agencies or instrumentalities) to commit serious human rights abuses against the people of Venezuela, including—

(I) firearms or ammunition (as such terms are defined in section 921 of title 18, United States Code), rubber bullets, police batons, pepper or chemical sprays, stun grenades, electroshock weapons, tear gas, water cannons, or surveillance technology; or

(II) sensitive technology.

(ii) **SENSITIVE TECHNOLOGY DEFINED.**—

(I) **IN GENERAL.**—For purposes of clause (i)(II), the term “sensitive technology” means hardware, software, telecommunications equipment, or any other technology, that the President determines is to be used specifically—

(aa) to restrict the free flow of unbiased information in Venezuela; or

(bb) to disrupt, monitor, or otherwise restrict speech of the people of Venezuela.

(II) **EXCEPTION.**—The term “sensitive technology” does not include information or informational materials the exportation of which the President does not have the authority to regulate or prohibit pursuant to section 203(b)(3) of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1702(b)(3)).

(3) **SPECIAL RULE TO ALLOW FOR TERMINATION OF SANCTIONABLE ACTIVITY.**—The President shall not be required to include a person on the list required under paragraph (1) if—

(A) the President determines that the person is no longer engaging in, or has taken significant credible steps toward stopping (including winding down contracts or other agreements that were in effect prior to the date of the enactment of this Act) the activity described in paragraph (2) for which the President would otherwise have included the person on the list; and

(B) the President has received reliable assurances that such person will not knowingly engage in any new activity described in such paragraph (2).

(4) **UPDATES OF LIST.**—The President shall transmit to the appropriate congressional committees an updated list under paragraph (1)—

(A) not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act; and

(B) as new information becomes available.

(5) **FORM OF LIST; PUBLIC AVAILABILITY.**—

(A) **FORM.**—The list required under paragraph (1) shall be submitted in unclassified form but may contain a classified annex.

(B) **PUBLIC AVAILABILITY.**—The unclassified portion of the list required under paragraph (1) shall be made available to the public and posted on the Web site of the Department of State.

(c) **WAIVER.**—The President may waive the application of sanctions described in section 5(b) with respect to a person on the list required under subsection (b) of this section if the President—

(1) determines that such a waiver is in the national interests of the United States and on or before the date on which the waiver takes effect, submits to the appropriate congressional committees a notice of and justification for the waiver; or

(2) determines that the conditions in Venezuela have improved with regard to respect for peaceful protest and basic human rights and on or before the date on which the waiver takes effect, submits to the appropriate congressional committees a notice of and justification for the waiver.

(d) **IMPLEMENTATION AUTHORITY.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The President may exercise all authorities provided under sections 203 and 205 of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1702 and 1704) to carry out this section.

(2) **EXCEPTION.**—

(A) **IN GENERAL.**—The authority to impose sanctions under paragraph (1) shall not include the authority to impose sanctions relating to the importation of goods.

(B) **GOOD DEFINED.**—In subparagraph (A), the term “good” has the meaning given that

term in section 16 of the Export Administration Act of 1979 (50 U.S.C. App. 2415) (as continued in effect pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 et. seq.)).

SEC. 7. COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY TO PROMOTE INTERNET FREEDOM AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION.

Not later than 120 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State, in consultation with heads of other Federal departments and agencies, as appropriate, shall submit to the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate a comprehensive strategy that is classified to the extent necessary to—

(1) assist the people of Venezuela to produce, access, and share information freely and safely via the Internet;

(2) increase the capabilities and availability of secure mobile and other communications through connective technology among human rights and democracy advocates in Venezuela;

(3) provide resources for digital training for media and academic and civil society organizations in Venezuela;

(4) increase emergency resources for the most vulnerable human rights advocates seeking to organize, share information, and support human rights in Venezuela;

(5) expand access to uncensored sources of local news and information using all available and effective mediums of communication, especially through platforms that leverage public-private partnerships;

(6) expand activities to safely assist and train human rights, civil society, and democracy activists in Venezuela to operate effectively and securely;

(7) expand access to proxy servers for democracy activists in Venezuela; and

(8) discourage telecommunications and software companies from facilitating Internet censorship by the Government of Venezuela.

SEC. 8. COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY TO ENCOURAGE VENEZUELA TO ABIDE BY THE PRINCIPLES ENSHRINED IN THE INTER-AMERICAN DEMOCRATIC CHARTER.

Not later than 120 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State shall submit to the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate a comprehensive strategy outlining how the United States is supporting the citizens of Venezuela in seeking—

(1) free, fair, and transparent elections—

(A) conducted with the presence of internationally recognized observers; and

(B) in which—

(i) all parties are permitted ample time to organize and campaign for such elections; and

(ii) all candidates are permitted equitable access to the media;

(2) basic civil liberties and human rights, including access to and support for non-governmental organizations in such activities;

(3) establishment of independent judiciaries and electoral councils; and

(4) development of an independent civil society with the capacity to advocate on behalf of constituents.

SEC. 9. STATEMENT OF POLICY ON POLITICAL PRISONERS.

It shall be the policy of the United States—

(1) to support efforts to research and identify prisoners of conscience and cases of human rights abuses in Venezuela;

(2) to offer refugee status or political asylum in the United States to political dissidents in Venezuela if requested and con-

sistent with the laws and national security interests of the United States;

(3) to offer to assist, through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, with the relocation of such political prisoners to other countries if requested, as appropriate and with appropriate consideration for the national security interests of the United States; and

(4) to publicly call for the release of Venezuelan country dissidents by name and raise awareness with respect to individual cases of Venezuelan country dissidents and prisoners of conscience, as appropriate and if requested by the dissidents or prisoners themselves or their families.

SEC. 10. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS FOR ASSISTANCE TO SUPPORT CIVIL SOCIETY IN VENEZUELA.

There is authorized to be appropriated to the United States Agency for International Development for fiscal year 2015 not less than \$5,000,000 to provide assistance to civil society in Venezuela.

SEC. 11. OFFSET.

Section 102(a) of the Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act of 2009 (22 U.S.C. 8412(a); Public Law 111-73; 123 Stat. 2068) is amended by striking “\$1,500,000,000” and inserting “\$1,493,000,000”.

SEC. 12. SUNSET.

This Act shall cease to be effective beginning on the date that is 2 years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CASTRO) 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 include extraneous material on this bill.

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

There was no objection.

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

First, after my remarks, I will place into the RECORD letters between the chairmen of the committees of referral on this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 4587, the Venezuelan Human Rights and Democracy Protection Act. This bill has received bipartisan support from many of my colleagues in the House and was passed more than 2 weeks ago by our Foreign Affairs Committee.

I would like to thank Chairman ROYCE, Ranking Member ENGEL, subcommittee Chairman SALMON, and Ranking Member SIREN for working with my office to craft the legislation that is before us this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, we are here today to condemn the ongoing human rights abuses being committed in Venezuela and to answer the cries of the people of Venezuela.

On February 12, 2014, also known in Venezuela as National Youth Day, students began protesting in several cities

against Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro's inability to stem violent crime, his undemocratic actions, and a rapidly deteriorating economy marked by high inflation and shortages of consumer goods. Since then, these students and the Venezuelan people, as a whole, have been met with intimidation, with violence, with imprisonment simply for calling for the respect of human rights and democratic change.

One example is the case of Leopoldo Lopez, a pro-democracy leader who continues to be in prison at a military facility on trumped-up charges by Maduro in an effort by Maduro to silence his many critics.

The case of Maria Corina Machado is another example. This courageous woman, a member of the Venezuelan National Assembly until just recently, has stood up for the people of Venezuela. And for drawing attention to the abuses being committed by the autocrat, she was stripped of her legislative seat.

Since the protest began, Mr. Speaker, there have been 42 people killed, nearly 60 reported cases of torture, more than 2,000 people unjustly detained, and hundreds more injured. And throughout this crisis, the so-called dialogue discussions with Maduro and UNASUR has provided no results, no actions, no concessions, and the innocent are still being imprisoned. And just 2 weeks ago, Mr. Speaker, 250 teenage protesters, ones who had camped out in public squares to protest, were rounded up and thrown in jail. Teenagers.

But the problems in Venezuela go beyond these protests. Venezuela has now become one of the most dangerous countries in Latin America. According to press reports, between January 2014 and April 2014, there were over 4,500 homicides in Venezuela. That is a staggering statistic, Mr. Speaker.

This call for freedom and democracy in Venezuela did not just start in February, and it is a shame that it has taken the events of these past few months for us to get active about the plight of the Venezuelan people. The struggle for freedom in Venezuela has been ongoing for over a decade due to the oppressive policies put forth by the late Hugo Chavez, which have now continued under his handpicked successor.

The legislation before us, Mr. Speaker, is very direct and very clear. It seeks to target Venezuelan officials by denying them visas to enter the United States, blocking property, freezing assets, and prohibiting financial transactions to members of the Venezuelan regime who are responsible for the commission of serious human rights abuses against the people of Venezuela. It is very clear, very direct.

The United States Congress must stand ready to act on the calls of freedom and democracy around the globe, and the Venezuelan people have sent us a distress signal for help. Today, we answer that call by condemning the actions taken by the Maduro regime and showing our support to the people of

Venezuela who are seeking liberty, freedom, human rights, and justice.

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

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS,
Washington, DC, May 23, 2014.

Hon. EDWARD R. ROYCE,
Chairman, Committee on Foreign Affairs,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN ROYCE: I am writing concerning H.R. 4587, the "Venezuelan Human Rights and Democracy Protection Act," which was favorably reported out of your Committee on May 9, 2014.

Given that certain provisions in the bill are within the jurisdiction of the Committee on Ways and Means, I appreciate that you have addressed these provisions in response to the Committee's concerns. As a result, in order to expedite Floor consideration of the bill, the Committee on Ways and Means will forgo action on H.R. 4587. Further, the Committee will not oppose the bill's Floor consideration, based on our understanding that you will work with us as the legislative process moves forward to ensure that our concerns continue to be addressed. This is also being done with the understanding that it does not in any way prejudice the Committee with respect to the appointment of conferees or its jurisdictional prerogatives on this or similar legislation.

I would appreciate your response to this letter, confirming this understanding with respect to H.R. 4587, and would ask that a copy of our exchange of letters on this matter be included in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD during Floor consideration.

Sincerely,

DAVE CAMP,
Chairman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC, May 27, 2014.

Hon. DAVE CAMP,
Chairman, Committee on Ways and Means,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN CAMP: Thank you for consulting with the Committee on Foreign Affairs on H.R. 4587, the Venezuelan Human Rights and Democracy Promotion Act, and for agreeing to forgo a sequential referral request so that the bill may proceed expeditiously to the Floor. The suspension text contains edits that implicate the Rule X jurisdictional interests of the Committee on Ways and Means that were drafted in consultation with your committee.

I agree that your forgoing further action on this measure does not in any way diminish or alter the jurisdiction of the Committee on the Ways and Means, or prejudice its jurisdictional prerogatives on this resolution or similar legislation in the future.

I will seek to place our letters on H.R. 4587 into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD during floor consideration of the resolution. I appreciate your cooperation regarding this legislation and look forward to continuing to work with the Committee on Ways and Means as this measure moves through the legislative process.

Sincerely,

EDWARD R. ROYCE,
Chairman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY,
Washington, DC, May 28, 2014.

Hon. ED ROYCE,
Chairman, Committee on Foreign Affairs,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN ROYCE: I am writing with respect to H.R. 4587, the "Venezuelan Human Rights and Democracy Protection Act,"

which the Committee on Foreign Affairs ordered reported favorably on May 9, 2014. As a result of your having consulted with us on provisions in H.R. 4587 that fall within the Rule X jurisdiction of the Committee on the Judiciary, I agree to discharge our Committee from further consideration of this bill so that it may proceed expeditiously to the House floor for consideration.

The Judiciary Committee takes this action with our mutual understanding that by foregoing consideration of H.R. 4587 at this time, we do not waive any jurisdiction over subject matter contained in this or similar legislation, and that our Committee will be appropriately consulted and involved as this bill or similar legislation moves forward so that we may address any remaining issues in our jurisdiction. Our Committee also reserves the right to seek appointment of an appropriate number of conferees to any House-Senate conference involving this or similar legislation, and asks that you support any such request.

I would appreciate a response to this letter confirming this understanding with respect to H.R. 4587, and would ask that a copy of our exchange of letters on this matter be included in the Congressional Record during Floor consideration of H.R. 4587.

Sincerely,

BOB GOODLATTE,
Chairman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC, May 28, 2014.

Hon. BOB GOODLATTE,
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN GOODLATTE: Thank you for consulting with the Committee on Foreign Affairs on H.R. 4587, the Venezuelan Human Rights and Democracy Promotion Act, and for agreeing to be discharged from further consideration of that bill. The suspension text contains edits to portions of the bill within the Rule X jurisdiction of the Committee on the Judiciary that were drafted in consultation with your committee.

I agree that your forgoing further action on this measure does not in any way diminish or alter the jurisdiction of the Committee on the Judiciary, or prejudice its jurisdictional prerogatives on this resolution or similar legislation in the future. I would support your effort to seek appointment of an appropriate number of conferees to any House-Senate conference involving this legislation.

I will seek to place our letters on H.R. 4587 into the Congressional Record during floor consideration of the resolution. I appreciate your cooperation regarding this legislation and look forward to continuing to work with the Committee on the Judiciary as this measure moves through the legislative process.

Sincerely,

EDWARD R. ROYCE,
Chairman.

Mr. CASTRO of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume and rise in strong support of H.R. 4587, the Venezuelan Human Rights and Democracy Protection Act.

I would first like to thank Congresswoman ROS-LEHTINEN for authoring this legislation and for her dedication to these important issues.

The eyes of this Congress and the international community are on Venezuela and President Nicolas Maduro and his security forces as they crack down on peaceful protesters. It is an absolute tragedy that 42 people have

been killed in protests throughout the country. I am also troubled that opposition leader Leopoldo Lopez remains in jail on charges while many others have been unjustly detained by the Maduro government.

I am grateful for President Obama and Secretary Kerry's strong statements condemning the government's reprehensible actions. Let me say that all of us in Congress want nothing more than a peaceful resolution to this conflict. It was disappointing when negotiations between the Maduro government and the opposition broke down, and I hope that these talks can be revived.

In March, the House of Representatives passed a resolution which encouraged "a process of dialogue between the Government of Venezuela and the political opposition to end the violence." I continue to believe that dialogue is the best way out of this crisis. In the meantime, the legislation that we are considering today makes it clear that the United States will not turn a blind eye to human rights violations.

This bill has been crafted to impose targeted sanctions on human rights violators in Venezuela, while not harming average Venezuelans who are already suffering as a result of terrible economic mismanagement by the country's leaders.

While the Venezuelan Government might try to say otherwise, let us be clear: there is not a single provision in this bill that would negatively affect the average Venezuelan. This bill does not touch the Venezuelan oil sector or other parts of the country's economy. Instead, the Venezuelan Human Rights and Democracy Protection Act revokes visas and freezes assets of human rights violators. Finally, it is important to note that this bill gives President Obama a great deal of flexibility to respond to events on the ground in Venezuela. Each and every sanction in this bill can be waived by the President at any time.

I would also point out, Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned when this came up in committee and as the gentlewoman will remember, that it is important that the United States sends a strong signal in Latin America. Although we understand that each of the Latin American countries is distinct and different and all have different histories, we witnessed in the 1960s through the 1980s many thousands of students who disappeared, who were removed from their homes by their governments because of the protests that were going on in those countries at the time. We want to make sure that that never happens again, and this bill is important in ensuring that the Venezuelan Government understands that the United States is watching and that we will make sure that something like that doesn't happen again.

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

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, at this time, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH), the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. I thank my good friend for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the Venezuelan Human Rights and Democracy Protection Act and to thank my distinguished colleague, Chairwoman ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, for her bold leadership in calling attention to the deplorable human rights situation in Venezuela and for creating this meaningful diplomatic tool to assist the Venezuelan people in resisting tyranny; first, the tyranny imposed by Hugo Chavez, and now that of his understudy in oppression, Nicolas Maduro.

At its core, this important initiative authorizes targeted sanctions to those who are responsible for violence and abuse, namely, members of the Maduro regime. The regime's silencing of democracy advocates, such as Leopoldo Lopez, is a violation of fundamental human rights and is an example of what makes this piece of legislation so fitting and so necessary.

I also support the bill's redirection of funds towards supporting civil society groups in Venezuela involved in promoting respect for democracy and fundamental freedoms, most importantly, the respect for the right to life, expression, and the right of religious liberty.

Indeed, I want to underscore the church's role as a voice independent of the State of Venezuela and how it has been unafraid to speak up on behalf of the oppressed and those protesting injustice. The Maduro regime has sought to silence the church, which remains a force independent of the government and a witness to the truth. The House of Representatives honors and deeply respects the key role that the church and faith-based civil society groups are playing in the fight for democracy and human rights in Venezuela.

As we all hope to see a free and democratic Venezuela, I strongly urge my colleagues to support the Ros-Lehtinen legislation, H.R. 4587.

Mr. CASTRO of Texas. I reserve the balance of my time, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. MESSER), a member of the Committee on Financial Services.

Mr. MESSER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this important bipartisan bill, to promote human rights in Venezuela. I want to commend my colleague, Chairwoman ROS-LEHTINEN, for bringing this important measure forward. It makes clear that, as a Nation, we do not condone the recent human rights abuses against Venezuelans as they fight for democratic change.

Venezuelans speaking out for basic rights and freedoms, such as the ability to speak freely and live free from intimidation and violence, have been

harassed, intimidated, threatened, and killed as a result of their desire to determine their own destiny. Just this month, 41 people have been killed, over 100 injured, and 60 tortured in Venezuela in response to pro-democracy demonstrations. These are alarming statistics, and action must be taken to prevent this violence and hold the perpetrators accountable. This legislation does that by placing sanctions on those in President Maduro's government who are responsible for this violence against those exercising their legitimate rights.

I urge all of my colleagues to support this important bipartisan measure.

Mr. CASTRO of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. MEEKS), my colleague on the Foreign Affairs Committee.

□ 1615

Mr. MEEKS. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor today to oppose H.R. 4587, the Venezuelan Human Rights and Democracy Protection Act. And while I am deeply troubled by the violence that erupted in Venezuela at the onset of protests months ago, and I join all of the people of Venezuela in mourning the loss of many lives, I also join all the people of Venezuela in the desire to see peaceful protests and a peaceful outcome, and that violence by anyone and everyone cease. I remain committed to doing everything in my power to support a positive outcome in that nation. But I believe vehemently that unilateral action by the United States is not the answer, and that is why this bill is not the right step to take.

I know that there are high emotions on all sides of this issue, and I understand why, but the House should not act emotionally, it should act judiciously. This bill does not advance U.S. interests, it will not help the people of Venezuela, and it sends the message to our regional allies that we don't care much about what they think. And these are allies, these are friends. Moreover, the Obama administration has the authority to do what this bill calls for right now, and the administration has shown its willingness to use its authority.

So what, then, is our objective? Is it intended to push Venezuela to the brink? What would that do for the Venezuelan people and the region? Now, I have spoken to all of our major allies in the region, and I have yet to hear any support by them for sanctions, but there is strong support for multilateral engagement. Our allies do not want to see the situation in Venezuela worsen.

The unilateral sanctions bill we are considering today is misguided in that it is an unfortunate reminder of the history of U.S. arrogance in the Western Hemisphere. We have a legacy in the Americas that is riddled with long-lasting consequences. That legacy has left us with a trust deficit. Today, we are considering a bill that does nothing to build that trust. Our standing in our

own hemisphere will never improve unless or until we build that trust.

While we pursue these sanctions, our allies are actively supporting dialogue. Members of this very body have made it a point to denounce and even condemn some regional organizations. Yet, one of those organizations, along with the Vatican, has managed to be the facilitator of engagement between some of the opposition and some in the Government of Venezuela. UNASUR, in its mediation efforts, continues to urge dialogue between all parties, and it is my sincere hope that dialogue can be successful.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. CASTRO of Texas. I yield the gentleman an additional 1 minute.

Mr. MEEKS. It is my sincere hope that dialogue can be successful, but in moments like this, I hope that we understand that unilateral sanctions would be another policy mistake—a costly mistake that we can and should avoid.

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

Mr. Speaker, we are gathered here because we believe we must speak for those who cannot speak freely, because our Venezuelan brothers and sisters are engaged in a critical battle for freedom and democracy against a brutal enemy. And we are gathered here because, even as we enjoy the freedoms to assemble and express our beliefs, we want our brothers and sisters in Venezuela to enjoy this and other basic liberties.

Millions of people throughout the country have expressed themselves in the past 3 weeks in support of democratic change. But the Maduro regime has responded with tear gas, with rubber bullets, and even live ammunition, killing at least 42, injuring hundreds, and unjustly detaining countless others.

We must act because democracy and human rights aren't issues for Venezuelans only. They matter to all of us who seek to advance human dignity, rule of law, justice, and freedom. Tyrants like Maduro fear a small group of committed citizens because they know that they are the only force that has changed history. And we don't have to go far in history to see that even one person can make a difference.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I am going to reserve the balance of my time to close if Mr. CASTRO is prepared to yield back.

Mr. CASTRO of Texas. I am, and I just wanted to say, again, thank you to the Congresswoman, to the chairman of the committee, Chairman ROYCE, and Ranking Member ENGEL.

Of course, I am here as many others are to support the bill. There was a counterargument that Mr. MEEKS so eloquently stated. I am glad he had a chance to voice it, but I do hope that the Congress today will get behind this bill.

With no other speakers, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume, and I will introduce our closing speaker. I never thought that I would utter these words, but it was a pleasure to work with Mr. CASTRO.

In closing for our side, Mr. Speaker, I yield the balance of my time to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DIAZ-BALART), my legislative brother, a member of the Committee on Appropriations and a champion of freedom, democracy, and human rights in the Western Hemisphere and around the world.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Speaker, I also rise in support of this important resolution, the Venezuelan Human Rights and Democracy Protection Act.

I first, Mr. Speaker, want to start by thanking my dear friend, a tireless champion for human rights and democracy around the world. She has thanked, and rightfully so, a number of people who have helped with this important legislation. But we would not be dealing with this issue on the floor if it weren't for the tireless effort, the constant and tireless struggle, fight, solidarity, and efforts of my dear friend, my sister, Congresswoman ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN. Those people around the world who are struggling in gulags and struggling for their freedom know that they have in ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN a true champion, and, once again, we see that leadership here today.

Mr. Speaker, since mid-February, the people of Venezuela—led mostly by students, by the way—have risen up to protest the corruption, the food shortages, the crime rates, and the alarming repression that have worsened during Maduro's few months in office, in control.

In response to these legitimate peaceful grievances, Mr. Speaker, what the Venezuelan regime has done is they have ordered security forces to brutally crack down—brutally with great force and brutality—crack down on the opposition. They have used unlawful force. They have used severe beatings and beatings of unarmed protesters, mostly students, and, by the way, even shooting some of them pointblank. They even jailed some of the main opposition leaders on phony charges, Mr. Speaker.

Since the protests began, as you have already heard, more than 40 people have been killed, about 3,000 people have been arrested, many have disappeared, and hundreds more have been injured, Mr. Speaker. In addition, Maduro's regime has instituted a virtual media blackout, blocking images even over the Internet and, by the way, even expelling journalists, including CNN and NTN. Just this past weekend alone, the Venezuelan regime blocked a CNN news crew from covering local elections. Obviously, they don't want anybody there who can show when and how they are stealing those sham elections.

It is shameful, Mr. Speaker, that the Chavez-Maduro regime policies have

managed to really get one of the richest economies in Latin America, the largest oil exporter in Latin America, and they have made it apparently a poverty-ridden nation. People now face shortages of some of the most basic commodities, Mr. Speaker. And, by the way, inflation is about 50 percent over the last year. So no wonder the people are struggling.

Maduro has intensified his intimidation tactics, though, by increasing political arrests and by militarizing his response, using thugs to respond to the peaceful opposition members and students who are in the streets demanding freedom. He has been labeling those unarmed opposition leaders as terrorists and also enemies of the state. We have heard that before, Mr. Speaker.

This bill, frankly, just directs our administration to rightly deny visas, to freeze assets, and prohibit financial transactions to the members of the Venezuelan regime responsible, Mr. Speaker, those responsible for committing these human rights abuses. These corrupt cowards who now have blood on their hands shouldn't be allowed to travel to our country while they continue to brutalize their fellow students, the students who are in the streets demanding freedom and the regaining of their sovereignty.

It is time to hold these human rights abusers accountable. Those complicit with those egregious acts of human rights violations, Mr. Speaker, they have to be named. They must be named and shamed. And they need to suffer the consequences of their actions.

So, Mr. Speaker, I have the great fortune and privilege of representing a patriotic and vibrant Venezuelan American community in southern Florida. They continue to bring attention to these deplorable conditions of those in Venezuela while the vast majority of the international community that some would like us to yield to their wishes, but yet they are not saying anything. The Venezuelan people are standing up—in many cases dying in the streets—and the vast majority of the international community is silent. So some would have us just also be silent.

With the passage of this bill, the United States House of Representatives will send a strong signal that we stand in solidarity with the Venezuelan people. As they struggle to regain democracy and to regain their freedom from the Maduro regime, this House, the United States of America, the people's House, stands with them. So I urge the support of my colleagues on this commonsense resolution.

I keep hearing people that I greatly respect: Well, but not all Venezuelans support sanctions. No. The regime doesn't support the sanctions. But this House, led by this leader right here sitting next to me, was instrumental in strengthening sanctions against Iran when a lot of the international community was against it and, frankly, when the administration—our own adminis-

tration—was lukewarm at best. But this House stood firm. This House stands for freedom and democracy. And, today, once again, this House can stand proudly side by side with those who are giving their all in the streets of Venezuela to regain their freedom, their sovereignty and their dignity.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I urge support of this important legislation.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this bill. I do not doubt the good intentions of its sponsors and supporters, but I firmly believe this bill, if enacted into law at this time, would have serious and negative consequences.

As the International Crisis Group described in its May 21st report, Venezuela has reached a tipping point in civil, military and governmental relations. The violence that began in February has cost at least 42 lives—mostly protestors, but also some security forces—injured hundreds, and produced scores of human rights violations and hundreds of arbitrary detentions. Finding a solution to this crisis is both urgent and complex.

The question facing this Congress is what should the United States do to support the negotiations currently underway, difficult as that process might be; ensure that those responsible for violence and the excessive use of force are held to account and brought to justice; help open up political space and dialogue among various civil society actors; and lower or diminish the levels of violence and confrontation?

The South American Union, UNASUR, with the support of the Vatican, is engaged in a dialogue process between the political opposition and the democratically-elected Maduro government. A clear agenda still needs to be set for this dialogue, which began with a couple of promising meetings, but now appears frozen. What is not needed is for the U.S. to appear to be interfering in the process and allowing the Maduro government to portray the political crisis of the past few months as a conflict between Venezuela and the United States, rather than a crisis between the Maduro government, political opponents and certain sectors of civil society. The State Department has suggested that some members of the opposition have asked them not to pursue sanctions which might put them on the defensive. Just the talk of U.S. sanctions has allowed President Maduro and his ministers to deflect attention from their lack of concessions and their failure to ease the economic crisis and deal effectively with safeguarding the security of ordinary citizens from criminal violence and attacks.

Not only do I believe these sanctions would be counter-productive inside Venezuela, but I also believe they will further damage U.S. relations in the hemisphere. U.S. allies in the region such as Colombia and Brazil are leading a serious diplomatic effort to resolve this crisis. They have publicly criticized U.S. efforts to impose sanctions. Sanctions legislation at this time would, once again, represent to the rest of Latin America the return of the U.S. taking unilateral actions opposed by the rest of the region. They would be considered not just unhelpful, but an insult.

I am no stranger to taking action and imposing sanctions on government officials and individuals engaged in gross violations of human

rights. But I also believe there is a right time and a right way to do so. This legislation is premature. I urge my colleagues to give diplomacy a chance to work, to give our Latin American neighbors time to promote dialogue, one that de-escalates tensions, identifies and holds to account those responsible for killings and human rights violations, and helps Venezuela not only to resolve this crisis but to advance a more pluralistic society. Don't throw gasoline on the fire. I urge my colleagues to vote "no" and oppose H.R. 4587.

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. 4587, as amended.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ACT OF 1998 AMENDMENT

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4028) to amend the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 to include the desecration of cemeteries among the many forms of violations of the right to religious freedom, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4028

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

SECTION 1. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) Cemeteries are sacred sites that are of great spiritual, cultural, and historical significance to many religious and ethnic groups.

(2) Congress is committed to protecting and preserving the heritage and sacred sites of national, religious, and ethnic groups, which includes cemeteries in the United States and abroad.

(3) Cemeteries around the world have and continue to be defaced or destroyed as a direct result of their affiliation with a particular religious or spiritual group.

(4) Such attacks constitute an assault on the fundamental right to freedom of religion, and are especially egregious when sponsored or tolerated by the local or national governments in the countries in which such offenses occur.

SEC. 2. AMENDMENT TO INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ACT OF 1998.

Section 2(a)(4) of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6401(a)(4)) is amended in the fourth sentence by inserting "desecration of cemeteries," after "confiscations of property,".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) and the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. MENG) 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 Mem-

bers may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on this bill.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, the fundamental freedom to practice the religion of one's choosing is a fundamental right and an essential element of democratic governance. Religious organizations of all kinds view their cemeteries, Mr. Speaker, as hallowed ground, deserving of respect and protection. Freedom of religion includes the right to gather at these sacred sites and to pay our respects to the beloved faithful who have gone before us.

Yet, in many places around the world, the desecration of religious cemeteries is an ongoing problem: sometimes through vandalism by intolerant groups; sometimes by construction or demolition without proper consultation of religious authorities. For example, Mr. Speaker, earlier this month, more than 50 graves were vandalized in a Jewish cemetery in northeast Hungary—their headstones toppled and smashed.

I was proud to be an original cosponsor of a similar effort by former Congressman Robert Turner last Congress, and I want to commend the gentlelady from New York (Ms. MENG) for her leadership in introducing H.R. 4028 this year. The International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, which this bill modifies, guides U.S. policy in promoting freedom of religion around the world.

Among other aspects, that law requires the State Department to report annually on violations of religious freedom abroad. By adding "desecration of cemeteries" to the examples of religious freedom violations listed in that act, H.R. 4028 says loudly and clearly that Congress and the American people stand in staunch opposition to the deliberate desecration of religious burial grounds.

□ 1630

In this way, the bill provides extra incentives for foreign governments to respect the rights of religious organizations regarding cemetery preservation.

In addition to Ms. MENG, I also want to recognize the important contributions of the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. COLLINS) during the Foreign Affairs Committee markup of this bill. Their bipartisan efforts have led to the good bill before us today, which deserves our unanimous support.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. MENG. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume, and I rise in strong support of H.R. 4028, the Protect Cemeteries Act, which I authored.

This resolution amends the International Religious Freedom Act to in-

clude the desecration of cemeteries among the forms of violations of the right to religious freedom.

I would like to thank Chairman ROYCE and Ranking Member ENGEL for helping to craft and advance this bipartisan resolution and for recognizing the seriousness of cemetery desecration. There is truly a bipartisan and collaborative spirit on the Foreign Affairs Committee, and that is a testament to its excellent leadership.

I would also like to thank Congressman DOUG COLLINS for his partnership here and valuable contributions to the bill, and thank you to both Republican and Democratic committee staffs for recognizing the value of this resolution and working so hard to bring it to the floor today.

I would particularly like to thank Janice Kaguyutan, Jessica Kahan, and Doug Campbell for all their help and great work. Thanks as well to Agudath Israel and to Dr. Bernard Fryshman for his dogged advocacy on this issue over many years.

The resolution is short, but—I believe—very significant. We are strengthening the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 by addressing the sanctity of burial grounds. Pursuant to this act, the United States can impose penalties on countries that obstruct religious freedom. These include, but are not limited to cutting foreign aid, imposing trade sanctions, and canceling cultural and scientific exchanges.

There are two related problems we seek to address through this legislation. One is the religiously motivated vandalism of cemeteries that occurs with alarming regularity. The second is the building and development over cemeteries in places where there are no communities remaining to protect and look out for the cemeteries. H.R. 4028 will give our diplomats a new tool they can use to protect our interests.

H.R. 4028 also empowers the commissions on International Religious Freedom and on the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad. The latter commission was established in the 1980s through legislation introduced by the late Congressman Stephen Solarz.

It works to identify and preserve cemeteries, memorials, and buildings in foreign countries that are associated with the cultural heritage of Americans, and it does much work in areas of the former Soviet Union, where Jewish communities were destroyed by the Holocaust and where power subsequently passed to atheistic, communist regimes.

It is essential that we act to protect religious freedom in these areas where, as we know, political instability and anti-Semitism are widespread. The genocides of the 20th century destroyed communities and left their burial grounds uncared for and unpreserved.

The preservation of cemeteries often reflects the religious tolerance and freedom of the countries in which they