

SUPPORTING THE PEOPLE OF
UKRAINE TO FREELY ELECT
THEIR GOVERNMENT

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 20, 2015

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res. 348 in support of the people of Ukraine in their exercise of their self-determination to free, fair and uninterrupted elections.

As the country with the oldest and most powerful democracy in the world, the United States has supported democracy, the rule of law and human rights all over the globe from Nigeria to Pakistan to China, to name a few.

The outcome of the October 25 elections in Ukraine is at the backdrop of the forcible and illegal occupation of Crimea, ordered by President Vladimir Putin of Russia.

The rights of the people of Ukraine to free, fair and transparent elections is especially critical, with Crimea currently under siege of Russian-led separatists who continue their attacks on Ukraine's forces set in place to protect the sovereignty of Ukraine.

Here in Congress, we have worked tirelessly to support free and fair elections in Ukraine through our support of its May 2014 elections, ensuring that international standards were upheld just as we have assisted in many elections in countries in transition or fighting insecurity from Nigeria to Pakistan.

In Nigeria and Pakistan, the elections occurred at the background of terrorism from Boko Haram, Al Qaida and other terrorist networks, who acted so viciously and caused thousands of Nigerians and Pakistanis to lose their lives and livelihoods.

Similarly, the citizens of Ukraine are at risk of being disenfranchised because of separatist controlled areas.

To this end the United States has worked to broker peace in Ukraine so that the people of Ukraine can exercise their right to self-determination though our support of the cease-fire agreement brokered between Ukraine, Russia and the Russian-led separatists which was not fully implemented and the subsequent Minsk Implementation Agreement.

But I stand with the people of the Ukraine, remain strong, we stand with you in exercising your Constitutional and human right to choose who will represent you.

The upcoming October 25, 2015 elections are critical for sustainable legislative and constitutional reform in Ukraine which will help promote democracy, the rule of law, upholding of human rights, the creation of security, all of which will catalyze the economic, social, cultural and political enfranchisement of the people of Ukraine, securing a bright future for the capable and exciting youth of Ukraine.

Indeed, here in Congress, we have taken numerous actions to uphold the sanctity of the right to economic, political and social enfranchisement of the people of Ukraine by passing the following legislation:

The Ukraine Freedom Support Act of 2014, authorizing the United States President to provide Ukraine's government with support necessary to set up infrastructure for reforms that will facilitate restoring Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity including lethal defense

services and articles, such as anti-tank, anti-armor and counter-artillery radar (worth \$100 million in FY 2015 and \$125 million in each of fiscal years 2016 and 2017 for such weapons); and

Sovereignty, Integrity, Democracy, and Economic Stability of Ukraine Act of 2014, which authorized loan guarantees for the Government of Ukraine.

Due to its geographical location, the Central European nation of Ukraine historically has been pushed and pulled between its neighbors with Europe to its west and Russia to its east.

This push pull from interested parties has caused conflict over the direction Ukraine would take after its independence from the former Soviet Union in 1991.

For example, in November of 2013, Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich suspended negotiations with the European Union over an agreement to integrate Ukraine into various European economic and political associations and instead accepted \$15 billion and other inducements to enter into closer ties with Moscow.

The decisions taken by President Yanukovich triggered demonstrations by thousands of Ukrainian citizens in the capital city of Kiev and throughout the country which led to numerous arrests, detentions and violent clashes, which led to the deaths of close to 100 protesters in February 2014.

In a cowardly act, President Yanukovich fled to the predominantly ethnic Russian region of Crimea in southeastern Ukraine, and then to Russia because of the chaos caused by his suspension of negotiations with the EU and the subsequent unrest that ensued, which also caused his unpopularity within his own party.

After President Yanukovich deserted his own people, an opportunistic Russian military force took up positions throughout Crimea, where, under a series of treaties that followed the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia had continued to maintain a series of military bases, notably at Sevastopol, where the Russian Black Sea naval fleet is based.

Indeed, Crimea itself was technically transferred from the Soviet republic of Russia to the Soviet republic of Ukraine in 1954.

Subsequently, in March 2014, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed legislation formally incorporating Crimea into Russia.

The United States and the European Union have opined that Russia's action is illegal and we have imposed a series of economic sanctions on Russia.

Russia continues to provide military equipment, training and other assistance to separatists and paramilitary forces in eastern Ukraine, resulting in an ongoing conflict with an estimated 6,000 deaths, hundreds of thousands of refugees and widespread destruction.

The Russian-led separatists in eastern Ukraine continue to refuse to implement Ukrainian law and stand in the way of the Ukrainian authorities to conduct elections in areas controlled by the separatists and hence are a stumbling block to free and fair elections in those areas.

Yet under all this stress, Ukraine continues to strive for its self-determination.

I commend all anti-corruption efforts in Ukraine.

The state Anti-Corruption Strategy Program Implementation for 2014–2017, which delineates anti-corruption reforms, persons, deadlines and infrastructure;

The creation of a National Agency for Prevention of Corruption;

The Ukrainian Law on Prevention of corruption, a new system which outlines financial control with electronic asset declaration of public servants;

The specialized Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office;

Corruption Offender Registry; and

Many more efforts to combat corruption and enhance the rule of law and financial integrity in Ukraine.

Mr. Speaker, I urge support of this resolution protecting the rights of the people of Ukraine to freely elect their government and determine their future.

Mr. Speaker, I also urge the Administration to expedite assistance to Ukraine to facilitate the political, economic and social reforms necessary for free and fair elections that meet international standards.

The Russian government, Russian-led separatists, its agents and supporters should not interfere in Ukraine's elections, through intimidation, violence or coercion.

The current relentless political, economic and military aggression on the people of Ukraine geared at subverting the independence, self-determination and the territorial integrity of Ukraine must stop.

I urge the people of Ukraine to help facilitate free and fair elections in Ukraine.

TRIBUTE TO URBANDALE'S
WEBSTER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

HON. DAVID YOUNG

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 21, 2015

Mr. YOUNG of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate the Webster Elementary School in Urbandale, Iowa, for being selected as a National Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education.

In order to receive this prestigious designation, schools must demonstrate a commitment to enriching the academic experience of each and every student by closing the achievement gaps among student subgroups. Overall, 335 schools have received this designation. Urbandale's Webster Elementary School has shown that hard work, dedication, and a commitment to excellence can lead an entire school to academic success. The leaders within this school have found a formula for success by working together to improve student-teacher relationships, meeting each student and their learning styles on an individual level.

Mr. Speaker, the efforts shown by Urbandale's Webster Elementary School demonstrates Iowa's commitment to academic excellence. This award is an embodiment of the hard work and dedication every member of their faculty has displayed to improve the lives of their students. It is truly an honor to represent the students and faculty of the Webster Elementary School in the United States Congress. I know that all of my colleagues in the United States House of Representatives will join me in congratulating them for their achievements, and wish each and every one of them nothing but continued success.

HONORING SERGEANT MAJOR
RICHARD "ROCKY" HERNANDEZ,
SR., U.S. ARMY, RETIRED

HON. JOHN R. CARTER

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 21, 2015

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Sergeant Major Richard "Rocky" Hernandez, Sr., U.S. Army, Retired. As a man who has lived his life in the service of his country and fellow man, it brings me great pride as a Texan to highlight the life of this public servant who has inspired many to pay the good will forward. SGM Hernandez selflessly served with distinction throughout his life in the military, the School District of Killeen, and the volunteer service that brought much needed help to retired veterans.

SGM Hernandez was born in Corpus Christi, Texas in March 1946. Heeding the call to service, SGM Hernandez departed high school early and enlisted in the U.S. Army in May, 1963. During his U.S. Army career he served over 14 years in Germany, deployed for one tour in Korea, and served two tours in Vietnam. While in Vietnam SGM Hernandez was assigned to the 196th Infantry Brigade, 23rd Infantry Division. SGM Hernandez was wounded in action on March 23, 1969 by enemy mortar fire and was awarded the Purple Heart Medal.

After achieving the rank of Sergeant Major, Rocky medically retired in 1989 having been disabled through peacetime and wartime injuries sustained in the service of his country. Nevertheless, SGM Hernandez would not be kept down for long. Following his military retirement SGM Hernandez served another 20 years for the Killeen Independent School District.

Yet still the call to serve and desire to help others burned inside. After joining a local Veterans Organization and hearing the voices of veterans seeking help, SGM Hernandez felt inspired to help his fellow veterans and their families navigate the complex VA system. In 1994 SGM Hernandez became a volunteer Veterans Service Officer. Since that time, SGM Hernandez has helped hundreds of veterans gain their well-deserved benefits. Today SGM Hernandez serves as Citizen on Patrol, where he continues his service with his eyes and ears to fight crime and evil wherever it resides.

After serving two full careers, SGM Hernandez exemplifies what it means to be an American and a Texan. May we follow the examples of great men such as SGM Hernandez and live our lives in the service of our fellow men and country. I join SGM Hernandez's family and friends in wishing him nothing but the best in the years ahead.

KNOW THE CBRN TERRORISM THREATS TO TRANSPORTATION ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 20, 2015

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 3350, the

"Know the CBRN Terrorism Threats to Transportation Act," which requires the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Intelligence and Analysis to conduct a terrorism threat assessment regarding the ground transportation of chemical, biological, nuclear, and radiological (CBRN) materials.

As a senior member of the Homeland Security Committee and the Ranking Member of the Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security, and Investigations, I appreciate the significance of this bill.

On September 11, 2001, 2,977 people were killed after terrorists hijacked four commercial aircraft and used three of them as guided missiles to destroy much of the complex that made up the New York City Twin Towers as well as a wing of the Pentagon.

The fourth plane was crashed into a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania as passengers heroically attempted to retake the plane from the control of hijackers.

Since September 11, 2001, security experts have warned of vulnerabilities that exist should terrorists plan to attack a chemical facility located within the United States or worse yet, gain unlawful access to a facility, pipelines, or transit routes and steal chemicals for a mass attack against civilians.

Transportation of chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) materials across our borders and within the United States may become targets for terrorists who seek to do us harm.

The 18th Congressional District of Texas, which I serve, is home to some of the world's largest petrochemical producers, which employ thousands of Houston area residents.

Chemicals are a vital and common presence in the lives of our nation's citizens, but we often forget how dangerous they can be under the wrong conditions.

On April 17, 2013, the small town of West, Texas felt the power and destructive force of ammonium nitrate when an accidental fire ignited what is believed to have been between 140 to 160 tons of the chemical.

This was no terrorist attack, but a very tragic accident.

The accident in the town of West, Texas reminded all of us who represent districts that count chemical plants or their owners and operators as constituents—how important it is to protect the transport of these products from theft or misuse by terrorists.

Ports, railways, pipelines, and trucks are critical to the domestic transport of chemical products.

U.S. seaports, like the Port of Houston, are vulnerable to terrorist attacks.

Ports serve as America's gateway to the global economy since the nation's economic prosperity rests on the ability of containerized and bulk cargo arriving unimpeded at U.S. ports to support the rapid delivery system that underpins the manufacturing and retail sectors.

A central component of national security is the ability of our international ports to move goods into and out of the country.

According to the Department of Commerce in 2012, Texas exports totaled \$265 billion.

The Port of Houston is a 25-mile-long complex of diversified public and private facilities located just a few hours' sailing time from the Gulf of Mexico.

In 2012, ship channel-related businesses contributed 1,026,820 jobs and generated

more than \$178.5 billion in statewide economic activity.

In 2014, the Port of Houston was ranked among U.S. ports:

1. 1st in foreign tonnage;
2. 1st among Texas ports with 46% of market share by tonnage and 95% market share in containers by total TEUS in 2014;
3. 1st among Gulf Coast container ports, handling 67% of U.S. Gulf Coast container traffic in 2014; and
4. 2nd in U.S. port in terms of total foreign cargo value (based on U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of Census)

The Government Accountability Office (GAO), reports that the Port of Houston and its waterways and vessels, are part of an economic engine handling more than \$700 billion in cargo annually.

The Port of Houston houses approximately 100 steamship lines offering services that link Houston with 1,053 ports in 203 countries.

The Port of Houston is home to a \$15 billion petrochemical complex, the largest in the nation and second largest in the world.

With the nation's largest petrochemical complex supplying over 40 percent of the nation's base petrochemical manufacturing capacity, what happens at the Port of Houston affects the entire nation.

In 2004, nearly 155 million tons of chemicals were transported by rail in North America, which constitutes 1.75 million rail cars of hazardous materials.

The volume of hazardous materials moving by rail more than doubled since 1980 indicates that rail has become an integral part of the tremendous increase in the transport of hazardous materials.

According to the Texas Department of Transportation approximately 2,200 trains per week travel within the Houston regional rail network, which is comprised of more than 800 miles of mainline tracks and 21 miles of railroad bridges.

I support this bill because we must protect the American people against potential terrorism through the unconventional use of biological, chemical or radiological materials that have a beneficial commercial or industrial purpose.

Without the proper precautions and security measures major U.S. cities such as Houston, Texas may be vulnerable to chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear attacks by terrorist.

H.R. 3350 addresses many problems by requiring the Secretary of Homeland Security to conduct a terrorism threat assessment of the transportation of chemical, biological, nuclear, and radiological materials through the United States land borders and within the United States.

In order to enforce the required threat assessment the Under Secretary for Intelligence and Analysis shall consult with the Administrator of the Transportation Security Administration, the Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border protection, and the heads of other Federal departments and agencies, as deemed appropriate to ensure that such terrorism threat assessment is informed by current information about homeland security threats.

Congress must take forward action as threats of chemical and biological terrorism rise and terrorist groups actively seeking hazardous chemicals in order to inflict harm against American citizens.