

the truly important issues that confront this country in the weeks to come.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MESSER. Again, Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from Kentucky for his remarks.

I believe the most direct path towards a healthier and more secure economy now and in the future is less spending, lower taxes, a balanced budget, and a smaller debt. The first step, though, is more transparency, letting taxpayers know what is happening here. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1315.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. MESSER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1315.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1700

SUPPORTING THE PEOPLE OF UKRAINE TO FREELY ELECT THEIR GOVERNMENT

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 348) supporting the right of the people of Ukraine to freely elect their government and determine their future, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 348

Whereas after President Yanukovych had fled Kyiv, Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered the forcible and illegal occupation of Crimea in March 2014;

Whereas Russian-led separatists have forcibly seized large areas of Ukraine and continue their attacks on Ukraine's forces;

Whereas the Russian Federation has continued to engage in relentless political, economic, and military aggression to subvert the independence and violate the territorial integrity of Ukraine;

Whereas the United States has supported the democratically elected Government of Ukraine, which represents the will of the people of Ukraine, and Congress has passed multiple pieces of legislation to provide support to Ukraine;

Whereas Congress passed the Sovereignty, Integrity, Democracy, and Economic Stability of Ukraine Act of 2014 (Public Law 113-95), which authorized loan guarantees for the Government of Ukraine;

Whereas Congress passed the Ukraine Freedom Support Act of 2014 (Public Law 113-272), which authorized the Administration to provide Ukraine's Government with support to facilitate necessary reforms, and stated that it is United States policy to assist the Government of Ukraine in restoring its sovereignty and territorial integrity;

Whereas in September 2014, a cease-fire agreement was brokered between Ukraine, Russia, and Russian-led separatists, but the agreement was never fully implemented;

Whereas in February 2015, an additional cease-fire, known as the Minsk Implementation Agreement or Minsk 2, was agreed upon;

Whereas the United States has assisted in many elections around the world, including Ukraine's Presidential election in May 25, 2014, to ensure that international election standards are upheld;

Whereas early parliamentary elections were held on October 26, 2014, but 29 of the 450 seats in parliament were not filled due to the inability to hold elections in areas controlled by separatists;

Whereas, despite the disenfranchisement of people living in separatist-controlled areas, international election observers declared the parliamentary elections in the rest of the country to have met international standards;

Whereas Ukraine and Russia are participating States of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and party to its commitments, including the 1990 Copenhagen Document which states that States "will respect each other's right freely to choose and develop, in accordance with international human rights standards, their political, social, economic and cultural systems" and that "free elections that will be held at reasonable intervals by secret ballot or by equivalent free voting procedure, under conditions which ensure in practice the free expression of the opinion of the electors in the choice of their representatives";

Whereas the next local elections are scheduled to take place in Ukraine on October 25, 2015;

Whereas these elections are critical to continued legislative and constitutional reform in Ukraine;

Whereas the Russian-led separatists in eastern Ukraine continue to refuse to implement Ukrainian law and to permit Ukrainian authorities to conduct elections in the areas they control and have therefore made free and fair elections in those areas impossible;

Whereas Ukraine's government has therefore been forced to postpone the local elections in those areas; and

Whereas the United States is supporting efforts to promote citizen engagement in the constitutional reform process, educating voters, and election monitoring; Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) strongly supports the right of the people of Ukraine to freely elect their government and determine their future;

(2) urges 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; and

(3) condemns attempts on the part of outside forces, specifically the Government of Russia, its agents and supporters, to interfere in Ukraine's elections, including through intimidation, violence, or coercion.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ROYCE. 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 in the RECORD.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, almost 2 years after the conflict in Ukraine began, Russian aggression there remains almost a daily regular occurrence. The fighting has taken over 8,000 Ukrainian lives, and that number is growing as Russia continues to provide weapons and support to separatists in eastern Ukraine.

Last year, along with Ranking Member ELIOT ENGEL and several other members of the Foreign Affairs Committee—there were eight of us, as I recall, including the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. CICILLINE), who is the author of this resolution before us today—we traveled to Ukraine to see the situation on the ground. We traveled to Kyiv and we traveled to Dnepropetrovsk in the east, and we spoke with local officials. We spoke with representatives from civil society, women's groups, lawyers' groups, local government, different minority groups, a broad range of individuals—leaders of the Tatar community, leaders of the Jewish community there, and even former supporters of President Yanukovych, among many, many others.

We heard that same message from everyone, namely, that they were committed to building a peaceful, united Ukraine that is free to determine its own future, and that they want to do it without outside interference.

Now there is a new effort to bring peace to this war-torn region under the so-called Minsk agreements. These specify a number of measures that must be implemented by all sides, one of which is to hold local elections by the end of this year. The Ukrainian Government has scheduled these for October 25, which is this Sunday.

Unfortunately, they cannot be held in the areas controlled by Russian-led separatists because intimidation and manipulation make free and fair elections impossible in these regions. But they will take place in the rest of the country where independent observers will ensure that they meet international standards, and this is to be welcomed.

Their hoped-for success will be a real-world demonstration that Ukraine is continuing to implement the democratic reforms that Ukrainian people are determined to bring peace into their country with.

I urge my colleagues to vote for this bipartisan resolution and reaffirm that America's commitment to Ukraine's independence and to the right of the Ukrainian people to determine their own future is strong and it is enduring.

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 support of this measure.

First of all, I want to thank Mr. CICILLINE for drafting this resolution. With its passage, we will again be signaling that the United States stands

with the people of Ukraine, that we want them to chart the future for their own country, and that we reject the aggression and unlawfulness of Russia's actions under President Putin.

Let me also thank our chairman, Ed ROYCE. The hallmark of the Foreign Affairs Committee is our success in advancing good, bipartisan legislation, and this resolution is a prime example of business as usual for our committee. I am very proud of it.

Our interest in Ukraine is nothing new. Over the past year, our committee has focused a great deal on this crisis. We have passed legislation aimed at assisting Ukraine. We want to see a successful democratic transition, we want Ukraine's territorial integrity to be restored, and we want to deter Russia from further aggression.

The cease-fire in Ukraine finally seems to be holding. That is good news, but I still have deep concerns.

First of all, while the upcoming elections are important, not all of Ukraine's citizens will have their voices heard. Only areas under Kyiv's control will be casting ballots—and Russia has a history of sticking its nose in Ukraine's elections. Putin has said that he won't interfere with this vote. But I am not holding my breath, nor should anyone else.

So we will be looking for some specific benchmarks. For instance, the agreement in Minsk requires that elections in Donetsk and Luhansk be held after Russia draws down its forces there. Not just Russian personnel, but all military equipment, all mercenaries, all support for proxies must be out of these areas before elections. It is critical that the OSCE mount a full-scale observation mission and be permitted to monitor every stage of the process. We will be keeping a close eye on this as well.

Yet, even if Minsk is followed to the letter—a cease-fire, followed by elections, followed by restoration of Kyiv's control over its own eastern border—the international order will remain compromised. This agreement does not address Crimea, nor does it hold the force of international law.

And as much as we talk about Minsk, we shouldn't forget prior and far more important agreements, such as the Helsinki Final Act and the Budapest Memorandum, which reaffirmed the core principle of the Final Act: that the territorial integrity of states is inviolable.

Ukraine was part of the former Soviet Union; and when the Soviet Union collapsed, Ukraine gave up its nuclear weapons. As part of giving that up, Ukraine was guaranteed its territorial integrity—guaranteed by the United States, by Russia, and by others. Certainly they are being betrayed right now, and we should not stand for it.

Lastly, we should have no illusions that this agreement will deter President Putin's aggression. Indeed, as Moscow dials up its intervention in the Middle East in Syria, Ukraine is look-

ing more and more like just one element of a much larger scheme by President Putin to destabilize countries on Russia's borders. That is what Putin wants to do. He wants to keep Ukraine unstable and destabilized.

So, with this resolution, we reaffirm our support for Ukraine, we express our hope that Minsk will keep the peace, and we make clear that we are keeping a watchful eye on Russia and that we are ready to continue assisting Ukraine to consolidate its democratic gains and restore its territorial integrity.

Ukraine wants to be democratic. Ukraine wants to look toward the West. Ukraine does not want to be dominated by Russia. We should give them all the support that they deserve. That is what the United States does, that is what the United States is all about, and that is what this resolution does. I urge my colleagues to support this measure.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, it is now my pleasure to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. CICILLINE), the author of this resolution.

Mr. CICILLINE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I rise to support H. Res. 348, supporting free elections in Ukraine.

I want to thank Chairman ROYCE and Ranking Member ENGEL for their strong support and cosponsorship of this legislation, which I was proud to introduce and which affirms Congress' unwavering support for free elections in Ukraine. I thank my many colleagues on both sides of the aisle who have signed on as cosponsors and contributed to the final language of the bill.

Support of the democratic and economic development of Ukraine in the face of Russian aggression remains one of the most vital efforts the United States can undertake to combat Russian belligerence and demonstrates our unwavering commitment to promoting democracy and human rights around the world.

Next week—next Sunday, in fact—the people of Ukraine will head to the polls to exercise their right to choose their own government. However, because of the continued defiance of Russian-led separatists, not every region of Ukraine will be able to participate in these elections.

The illegal and forcible occupation of Crimea and the ongoing Russian support for separatists in eastern Ukraine are a clear violation of international law and diplomacy. The Minsk II agreement was a historic step toward potentially ending the violence and unrest in the country, and it is now upon the Governments of Ukraine, Russia, and the U.S. and our European allies as implementing partners to ensure its successful execution. The existing cease-fire is a positive development, but one

that must be accompanied by free elections and restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity.

Ukraine has local elections scheduled for most of the country—except some separatist-controlled areas—for this Sunday, October 25. This resolution demonstrates this Congress' steadfast commitment to supporting the right of the people of Ukraine to freely elect their government and determine their future. It condemns any Russian attempts to interfere in Ukraine's elections in any way, including through intimidation, violence, or coercion. During Ukraine's last elections, these tactics were used to prevent Ukrainians from voting in certain regions. This cannot happen again, and any actions undermining these elections must be met with swift and uncertain international condemnation.

At this delicate juncture in Ukraine's history, it is essential that the United States and our European allies continue to demonstrate firm support for Ukrainian territorial integrity, sovereignty, and the right of Ukrainian people to participate in free and fair elections. America has a long history of supporting free and fair elections and the right of people to decide their own future.

This resolution was passed by the Committee on Foreign Affairs with overwhelming bipartisan support, and I urge my colleagues to support its passage today.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CONNOLLY).

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend from New York and, of course, the distinguished chairman of the committee.

I rise in support of H. Res. 348. The people of Ukraine have the right to hold free and fair elections within the sovereign territory of their own country. The ruthless tyranny of Russian military aggression in Ukraine must end, and we must never agree to a settlement that even hints to President Vladimir Putin that the borders of Europe are up for sale.

The resolution notes: the forcible and illegal occupation of Crimea. The United States must make it clear in both our words and our deeds that Crimea is within the sovereign territory of Ukraine, and we will not recognize its forcible and illegal annexation by Russia—ever. This resolution is clear on that account, and I thank the author, Mr. CICILLINE, for it.

The Senate and House of Representatives recently passed the fiscal year 2016 National Defense Authorization Act conference report. That text included an amendment I authored to prohibit the authorization of funds to be obligated or expended in order to implement any activity that could be construed as recognizing the sovereignty of the Russian Federation over Ukraine's Crimea. Crimea is not

an issue we can allow to fade into the background—ever. As the resolution notes in just its second clause, this was Putin's original sin in Ukraine.

If we are to deter, Mr. Speaker, further Russian separatist and revanchist moves in eastern Ukraine, we must never yield on Crimea.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

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

In closing, once again, I want to voice my strong support for this resolution. I again thank Mr. CICILLINE for authoring this measure and his leadership, and I thank our chairman once again.

Even with a cease-fire in place, the crisis in Ukraine is a major threat to the international order. The United States stands with the people of Ukraine as they try to chart the path forward for their country and restore their territorial integrity. So long as President Putin's aggression continues, we need to stay focused on this serious challenge. I urge my colleagues to support this measure.

I yield back the balance of my time.

□ 1715

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, let me again thank ELIOT ENGEL, along with Mr. CICILLINE and Mr. CONNOLLY—cosponsors of this resolution with myself and other members of that committee—but mention in particular the decision we made to go as far east in Ukraine as we could. We traveled to the border of Luhansk and Donetsk, actually, because Dnipropetrovsk was where we flew in. To the south is Donetsk. To the east is Luhansk.

One of the great advantages of having with us the ranking member—an individual who knows the country well and knows the people well, Mr. ELIOT ENGEL—is the fact that both of his grandparents on his mother's side are from Ukraine and both of his grandparents on his father's side are from Ukraine.

It is a reminder to us of the long struggle, the long, ardent effort, for independence, for some modicum of freedom, that the people of Ukraine have struggled for all of these years, a dream that finally seemed realized; and now, in the wake of that, you have the occupation of the eastern and southern parts of the country.

I think it is a reminder to all of us of how we can be surprised on the world stage. The United States, in my opinion, could do more in this particular case to end the aggression. As people told us in Dnipropetrovsk—and we were there, actually. We had a service in the synagogue where Mr. ENGEL spoke during Passover. People asked us in each of these groups—the city council, the governor, the women's groups, the different civil society groups—they said: We can handle the fact that every skin-headed malcontent that Putin can

recruit, that he radicalizes, and he trains—then they send them here, and we capture them, and we hold them in our brig until the end of hostilities—but what is a real challenge is the Russian armor, that Russian equipment out there. We can't match that. We need anti-tank missiles.

Now, anti-tank weapons is what they have asked for. Many of us in Congress, myself included, have asked that we more forcefully oppose Russian aggression by giving those people on those frontlines the armaments they need to defend themselves, and the House has gone on record as taking this position.

I think it would be a deterrent against Russian aggression that has brought so much suffering, and my hope is that, as we go forward, we convince the administration as well.

The local elections scheduled for this Sunday are a concrete example that Ukrainians are determined to do all that they can to achieve peace throughout the entirety of that country. By overwhelmingly adopting this bipartisan resolution, I believe the House will send a clear message to the Ukrainian people that the United States remains committed to their right to have Ukrainians choose their own government and choose their own destiny.

I want to thank the gentleman from Rhode Island for authoring this particular bill, and I urge its passage.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. PASCRELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 348 to support the right of the people of Ukraine to freely elect their government and determine their future, which was introduced by my friend, Representative DAVID CICILLINE.

Citizens everywhere should be afforded the right to freely choose their leaders—and the people of Ukraine are no different. It is imperative that the American people stand with Ukrainians to ensure that the future of their government is determined freely and fairly.

Russian troops began an illegal occupation of Crimea following the resignation of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych in March 2014. In spite of economic sanctions, diplomatic efforts and successive ceasefires, we have tragically seen over 6,500 people killed in eastern Ukraine since Russia annexed Crimea. Russia's continued violations of the Minsk agreement by ignoring the ceasefire is simply unacceptable. Their actions betray their previous commitments and have derailed good faith efforts to de-escalate the crisis in Ukraine. Russia's continued military aggression in Ukraine threatens peace and security in the region. Russia's aggression has also hindered the electoral process and disenfranchised voters in the troubled region. I support Ukraine's right to determine their own future, protect their territorial integrity and we must do all we can to prevent the slaughter of innocent lives.

Mrs. LAWRENCE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to encourage the passage of H. Res. 348, supporting the right of Ukrainian citizens to freely elect their officials and determine their future. I would like to emphasize the importance of protecting democracy around the world. In 2015, it is essential that we ensure

people at home and abroad are able to elect their government representatives by exercising this basic right.

This issue is of particular importance to me as the Congressional Representative for the 14th District of Michigan, which is home to a large population of women and minorities who fought hard to gain the right to vote. This year marked the 50th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act, which is of critical importance in protecting every citizen's right to participate in free and fair elections. However, fair elections are also vital to democracies across the globe. Therefore, we must act appropriately when those rights are infringed upon.

This resolution demonstrates the federal government's commitment to protect Ukraine's critical elections. Ukraine's next local elections are scheduled to take place on October 25, 2015 and are essential for the continuation of legislative and constitutional reform. We cannot allow Russia or other outside forces to interfere with Ukraine's elections, especially through intimidation, violence, or coercion. By supporting the right of the people of Ukraine to freely elect their government and have a say in their future, we are working toward ensuring all people around the world benefit from these basic yet profoundly critical rights.

I am grateful that our chamber is continuing with our legacy of safeguarding democracy. I want to thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for supporting America's commitment to defending these important freedoms around the world.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 348, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until approximately 6:30 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 5 o'clock and 20 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1830

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. HULTGREN) at 6 o'clock and 30 minutes p.m.