

American law has asked you to do it. Finally, your green card is ready to be delivered, and you are waiting at the post office for it to come—right there by the mailbox, waiting for it to come. You check online. Online, it says it was delivered yesterday, but you don't have it. You call your Congressman for help, and your Congressman says, "There is nothing we can do," and there hasn't been until this Speier legislation today.

For the first time, we give constituents who have played by the rules an opportunity to pay, at their expense, in order to guarantee that this document that will allow them to work, that will allow them to feed their families, that will allow them to pursue that American Dream is going to end up in their hands. Golly, it sounds small when you read the legislation, but if you are that family, Mr. Speaker, there is nothing bigger in your life.

I am grateful for the partnership of all of my colleagues who made this possible tonight.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

In closing, let me again congratulate Congresswoman SPEIER and Congressman WOODALL. I am equally grateful when we have the opportunity to work together. I see this as an opportunity on many, many issues.

For example, this legislation, albeit simple in context, has a broad influence and impact. It means that anyone who is intending to do harm by either having stolen mail or by having taken a document that does not belong to them now can be thwarted. In this climate in which we must be particularly sensitive in protecting the Nation against terrorism, domestic terrorism, people misusing documents, or identity theft, this is a very important contribution to thwarting that effort. As has been indicated, it gives individuals who work very hard and who desire the American Dream the opportunity to be documented.

I think it fits very well in what I hope will be an ongoing commitment to improving the immigration system to the extent of passing comprehensive immigration reform, because it does recognize that there are people who are desiring to do good who come to this country.

For that reason, I ask my colleagues to support this important contribution to those who work hard, who choose to support the values of this Nation, and who work hard as new immigrants and as potential citizens of this Nation. I ask my colleagues to support H.R. 4712.

I also thank the Judiciary Committee for its work on this legislation.

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BISHOP) that the House suspend the

rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4712, 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.

IMPROVING SMALL BUSINESS CYBER SECURITY ACT OF 2016

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5064) to amend the Small Business Act to allow small business development centers to assist and advise small business concerns on relevant cyber security matters, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5064

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 "Improving Small Business Cyber Security Act of 2016".

SEC. 2. ROLE OF SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTERS IN CYBER SECURITY AND PREPAREDNESS.

Section 21 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 648) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)(1), by striking "and providing access to business analysts who can refer small business concerns to available experts;" and inserting "providing access to business analysts who can refer small business concerns to available experts; and, to the extent practicable, providing assistance in furtherance of the Small Business Development Center Cyber Strategy developed under section 5(b) of the Improving Small Business Cyber Security Act of 2016"; and

(2) in subsection (c)—

(A) in paragraph (2)—

(i) in subparagraph (E), by striking "and" at the end;

(ii) in subparagraph (F), by striking the period and inserting "; and"; and

(iii) by adding at the end of the following:

"(G) access to cyber security specialists to counsel, assist, and inform small business concern clients, in furtherance of the Small Business Development Center Cyber Strategy developed under section 5(b) of the Improving Small Business Cyber Security Act of 2016."

SEC. 3. ADDITIONAL CYBER SECURITY ASSISTANCE FOR SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTERS.

Section 21(a) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 648(a)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

"(8) CYBER SECURITY ASSISTANCE.—The Department of Homeland Security, and any other Federal department or agency in coordination with the Department of Homeland Security, may leverage small business development centers to provide assistance to small businesses by disseminating cyber security risk information and other homeland security information to help small business concerns in developing or enhancing cyber security infrastructure, cyber threat awareness, and cyber training programs for employees."

SEC. 4. CYBER SECURITY OUTREACH FOR SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTERS.

Section 227 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 148) is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsection (1) as subsection (m); and

(2) by inserting after subsection (k) the following:

"(1) CYBERSECURITY OUTREACH.—

"(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may leverage small business development centers to provide assistance to small business concerns by disseminating information on cyber threat indicators, defensive measures, cybersecurity risks, incidents, analyses, and warnings to help small business concerns in developing or enhancing cybersecurity infrastructure, cyber threat awareness, and cyber training programs for employees.

"(2) DEFINITIONS.—For purposes of this subsection, the terms 'small business concern' and 'small business development center' have the meaning given such terms, respectively, under section 3 of the Small Business Act."

SEC. 5. GAO STUDY ON SMALL BUSINESS CYBER SUPPORT SERVICES AND SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER CYBER STRATEGY.

(a) REVIEW OF CURRENT CYBER SECURITY RESOURCES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Comptroller General of the United States shall conduct a review of current cyber security resources at the Federal level aimed at assisting small business concerns with developing or enhancing cyber security infrastructure, cyber threat awareness, or cyber training programs for employees.

(2) CONTENT.—The review required under paragraph (1) shall include the following:

(A) An accounting and description of all Federal Government programs, projects, and activities that currently provide assistance to small business concerns in developing or enhancing cyber security infrastructure, cyber threat awareness, or cyber training programs for employees.

(B) An assessment of how widely utilized the resources described under subparagraph (A) are by small business concerns and a review of whether or not such resources are duplicative of other programs and structured in a manner that makes them accessible to and supportive of small business concerns.

(3) REPORT.—The Comptroller General shall issue a report to the Congress, the Administrator of the Small Business Administration, the Secretary of Homeland Security, and any association recognized under section 21(a)(3)(A) of the Small Business Act containing all findings and determinations made in carrying out the review required under paragraph (1).

(b) SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER CYBER STRATEGY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after the issuance of the report under subsection (a)(3), the Administrator of the Small Business Administration and the Secretary of Homeland Security shall work collaboratively to develop a Small Business Development Center Cyber Strategy.

(2) CONSULTATION.—In developing the strategy under this subsection, the Administrator of the Small Business Administration and the Secretary of Homeland Security shall consult with entities representing the concerns of small business development centers, including any association recognized under section 21(a)(3)(A) of the Small Business Act.

(3) CONTENT.—The strategy required under paragraph (1) shall include, at minimum, the following:

(A) Plans for leveraging small business development centers (SBDCs) to access existing cyber programs of the Department of Homeland Security and other appropriate Federal agencies to enhance services and streamline cyber assistance to small business concerns.

(B) To the extent practicable, methods for the provision of counsel and assistance to

improve a small business concern's cyber security infrastructure, cyber threat awareness, and cyber training programs for employees, including—

(i) working to ensure individuals are aware of best practices in the areas of cyber security, cyber threat awareness, and cyber training;

(ii) working with individuals to develop cost-effective plans for implementing best practices in these areas;

(iii) entering into agreements, where practical, with Information Sharing and Analysis Centers or similar cyber information sharing entities to gain an awareness of actionable threat information that may be beneficial to small business concerns; and

(iv) providing referrals to area specialists when necessary.

(c) An analysis of—

(i) how Federal Government programs, projects, and activities identified by the Comptroller General in the report issued under subsection (a)(1) can be leveraged by SBDCs to improve access to high-quality cyber support for small business concerns;

(ii) additional resources SBDCs may need to effectively carry out their role; and

(iii) how SBDCs can leverage existing partnerships and develop new ones with Federal, State, and local government entities as well as private entities to improve the quality of cyber support services to small business concerns.

(4) DELIVERY OF STRATEGY.—Not later than 180 days after the issuance of the report under subsection (a)(3), the Small Business Development Center Cyber Strategy shall be issued to the Committees on Homeland Security and Small Business of the House of Representatives and the Committees on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs and Small Business and Entrepreneurship of the Senate.

(c) DEFINITION.—The term “small business development center” has the meaning given such term in section 3 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 632).

SEC. 6. PROHIBITION ON ADDITIONAL FUNDS.

No additional funds are authorized to be appropriated to carry out the requirements of this Act or the amendments made by this Act. Such requirements shall be carried out using amounts otherwise authorized.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT) and the gentleman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous materials on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

It is an honor to serve as chairman of the House Small Business Committee. It affords me the special opportunity of hearing directly from the very men and women who help drive our economy—America's small-business owners.

At a hearing several months ago, a small business owner shared his per-

sonal experience with a serious cyber attack. He said:

I logged into our bank accounts, and to my utter horror, I found that my balance was zero. This was a payday, and I was terrified that the paychecks that were issued that day would not clear. We were supporting a number of families, many of which live paycheck to paycheck and could not have made it without the paycheck we issued that day. I was also very worried about our business' reputation since a restaurant nearby had just bounced their paychecks, and the company never recovered from the bad publicity they received from not making their payroll.

Stories like this show the real-world consequences of cyber attacks. Small businesses are at serious risk from a growing number of cyber threats.

There is no doubt that the information technology revolution has provided small businesses with new tools and opportunities to compete in the global economy. However, technology changes mean hackers are coming up with more and more sophisticated methods to go after intellectual property, bank accounts, Social Security numbers, and anything else that can be used for financial gain or for a competitive edge.

In 2015, the average amount stolen from small business bank accounts after a cyber attack was over \$32,000; and according to a recent report by Verizon Enterprise Solutions, a shocking 71 percent of cyber attacks occurred in businesses with fewer than 100 employees.

It is absolutely critical to both the economic and national security of this country that our small businesses have all of the necessary cyber tools to protect themselves from cyber attacks. Small businesses lack the resources to combat cyber attacks. The Federal Government needs to step up its game when it comes to protecting the cybersecurity of small businesses and individuals. That is why I support H.R. 5064, the Improving Small Business Cyber Security Act of 2016.

This legislation will help small businesses that face cyber threats by providing access to additional tools, resources, and expertise through existing Federal cyber resources by allowing the Department of Homeland Security and other Federal agencies to provide assistance to small businesses through the Small Business Administration's non-Federal partners, the Small Business Development Centers, or SBDCs. This increased coordination will lead to greater cyber support for small businesses.

I commend Mr. HANNA for his hard work on this legislation. He has done a great job as chairman of his subcommittee. Unfortunately, he announced his retirement, and he will be leaving us after this term. He has really done a tremendous amount of work for small businesses all over the country because he, himself, has been a successful small-business person; so he knows what the challenges are, and he has tried to put them to work in his years here in the House in helping

small businesses all across the country. After all, 70 percent of the new jobs that are created in the American economy are created by small businesses, so they are absolutely critical. Again, I commend Mr. HANNA for his hard work on behalf of these folks.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 5064.

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

□ 2000

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

I rise in support of H.R. 5064, the Improving Small Business Cyber Security Act of 2016. Technology has changed the way we all live, but none more so than for small businesses. It has afforded America's small employers a unique opportunity to sell their products not just nationally, but globally.

Despite new occasions for economic growth, technology has also introduced profound risks. We hear too often of data breaches and cyber espionage. Yet, we never really think this could happen to us until it does. All it takes is one incident to have devastating impacts to small businesses. In fact, 60 percent of small entities go out of business after 6 months of being hacked.

Clearly, cybersecurity should be a priority to protect our national security and economy. Failure to do so leaves us all at risk. Whether a business is adopting cloud computing or simply maintaining a Web site, cybersecurity should be part of their plan. However, only 31 percent of small firms take active measures to guard against such attacks, making them the ideal target for cybercriminals.

A lack of awareness and the high cost to install security mechanisms leaves many small-business owners exposed. Those that are aware of the threat, like government contractors, must navigate demanding IT specifications and complex regulations in order to stay competitive and win Federal contracts.

To help facilitate the preventive measures within the private sector, H.R. 5064, the Improving Small Business Cyber Security Act, will leverage the Small Business Administration's vast network of Small Business Development Centers.

With 63 lead centers and 900 outreach locations, SBDCs have the capacity to reach small businesses throughout the country. They also have a proven record of assisting entrepreneurs with extensive courses in management and technical assistance. In the last fiscal year, SBDCs trained over 260,000 clients and advised almost 190,000 clients.

This bill will utilize these existing resource partners by allowing the centers to assist small firms in developing and enhancing their cybersecurity infrastructure and employee training programs. The bill also calls for an SBDC cyber strategy to be designed to further support small employers to

protect themselves, their employees, and their customers.

This legislation ensures that our national efforts combating cyber attacks can be utilized by our Nation's more vulnerable businesses. We cannot continue to accept the bare minimum as our Nation seeks to end continued data breaches. Therefore, I ask my fellow Members to support this bill.

Let me just take this opportunity, also, to commend the gentleman from New York (Mr. HANNA) for the great work that he has done on this issue.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. HANNA).

Mr. HANNA. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Chairman CHABOT, Chairman MCCAUL, Ranking Member VELÁZQUEZ, and Ranking Member THOMPSON for the support of their committees on this bill. This bill was a collaborative endeavor and all of their staffs worked hard and long to help ensure this bill made it to the floor today.

I also want to thank the bill's lead sponsor, Representative KILMER, for working with us on this bipartisan legislation.

America's small businesses are a critical part of our Nation's economy. There are 28 million small businesses, and in recent years they have increasingly become the victims of cyber attacks. By one estimate, nearly 70 percent of all cyber attacks are now being directed at our Nation's small businesses.

The reason for this is clear. Small businesses too often lack the resources or the experience required to make prudent investments in cybersecurity.

The Improving Small Business Cyber Security Act addresses this issue by empowering the more than 900 Small Business Development Centers across our country to provide cyber support to these small businesses. This support would be offered in accordance with a small business cybersecurity strategy, which would be developed jointly by the Department of Homeland Security and the Small Business Administration.

Cyber attacks can decimate small businesses, potentially costing them tens of thousands of dollars to recover lost data and secure networks. It is clear to all of us that the upfront cost to invest in state-of-the-art technologies are prohibitive for many businesses.

This bill represents an opportunity to help small businesses bridge the knowledge gap in cyberspace by empowering the Small Business Development Centers to provide up-to-date relevant and cost-effective cyber support to service them.

This bill also makes good financial sense. By relying on already existing programs and infrastructure, it improves the Federal resources we already have to ensure that they better work for America's small businesses and at no additional cost.

I urge my colleagues to support this commonsense bill. Again, I would like to thank Chairman CHABOT for his support.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. KNIGHT), a member of the Small Business Committee.

Mr. KNIGHT. Mr. Speaker, we talk a lot about cybersecurity in the context of national defense, and rightfully so. As a Nation, we ought to take steps now to ensure our security into the 21st century. But this is an issue that affects so many people. One that often gets overlooked is the small business community.

As small businesses increasingly rely on Web-based products and services, they offer themselves more and more attacks from cybercriminals. Increases in technology have resulted in more sophisticated methods of cyber attacks, including hacking, malicious software, physical error, and lost or stolen devices.

Even a simple cyber attack can effectively destroy a small business. In fact, 81 percent of small businesses are concerned about a cyber attack, but only 63 percent have a cybersecurity measure in place.

Many businesses do not feel that they have the adequate legal protections to share cyber threat indicators with the National Cybersecurity and Communications Integration Center, the NCCIC. It is clear to me that the public and private sector must work together to protect our small businesses.

The Improving Small Business Cyber Security Act of 2016 eases the burden on small businesses facing cyber threats by providing access to additional tools, resources, and expertise through existing Federal cyber resources.

I am proud to cosponsor this legislation, and it will lead to increased security for our small businesses, which will lead to greater growth and opportunities for them.

I urge this Chamber to support this important measure.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. RATCLIFFE), who is the chairman of Homeland Security's Subcommittee on Cybersecurity, Infrastructure Protection, and Security Technologies, which handles cybersecurity and a number of other very important issues.

Mr. RATCLIFFE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 5064, the Improving Small Business Cyber Security Act of 2016. I thank the gentleman from New York (Mr. HANNA) for leading the charge on this very important piece of legislation. I also thank Chairman CHABOT for his leadership on the Small Business Committee and Chairman MCCAUL for his leadership on the Committee on Homeland Security.

Mr. Speaker, American small businesses are on the frontlines in the battle against cybercriminals, but right now many of them lack the resources to combat this growing and sophisticated threat. America's 28 million small businesses constitute 54 percent of our annual sales here in the United States and, because of that, they are under cyber attack like never before. The frequency and high costs of such attacks on small businesses is causing ripple effects throughout our economy right now.

H.R. 5064 amends the Homeland Security Act to ensure that Small Business Development Centers can leverage existing cybersecurity programs at the Department of Homeland Security. Additionally, this bill requires the Department of Homeland Security and the Small Business Administration to jointly develop a cyber strategy for small businesses so that they can better utilize cyber programs from DHS and from the Federal Government.

H.R. 5064 also requires a review by the Government Accountability Office of current cybersecurity programs offered by the Federal Government to small businesses.

Mr. Speaker, Small Business Development Centers have been on the ground helping small businesses in this country for more than 30 years. They have a presence in virtually every community in this country. This bill provides them with tools, resources, and the expert guidance that they need to tap into the already existing cyber resources in order to better meet the 21st century needs of small businesses in this country.

Small businesses, Mr. Speaker, are the life blood of the American economy, so we need to ensure that resources are available to all of them to combat these cyber threats. This bill works to achieve that goal.

I, therefore, ask my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 5064.

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

Our committee hears from small businesses too often about the cost and complexities associated with cybersecurity. With businesses having to be familiar with small business data regulations, ever-changing cyber threats, and the cost to install and maintain a cybersecurity system, many small-business owners wonder when they will have time to actually operate their business.

The changes made by H.R. 5064 will unify our efforts and create a streamlined process for small employers seeking to install cyber safeguards. Utilizing the existing national network of SBDCs—many of which small businesses already seek assistance from—as a source for cyber education and awareness provides a critical tool for American entrepreneurs.

I, once again, urge my colleagues to support this measure.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume to close.

Mr. Speaker, I would, first of all, like to thank my colleague, Ranking Member VELÁZQUEZ, for, once again, working in a bipartisan and cooperative effort. That is one thing on the Small Business Committee we always try to do, and we have a very good working relationship. I want to thank the gentlewoman for continuing that on this bill and bills in the past and, hopefully, bills in the future as well.

Relative to cybersecurity attacks, we have seen the United States under a legion of attacks in recent years. They happen virtually every day. The Federal Government itself has been hit a number of times. The Office of Personnel Management had 20-plus-million personal individuals who had their files hacked in the government. We have seen the Postal Service, we have seen the State Department, and we have even seen the White House hacked. So it is a big problem.

Now, this happens to large corporations. We have had some of the largest corporations who have really taken it on the chin, and literally it cost them millions of dollars. Corporations like Target and you name it, they have really been hit. They generally have the resources that they can recover from this. As detrimental as it is to their business, they survive.

When this happens to small businesses, it may virtually be the death knell for them. You may have families who no longer have their source of support because the business just can't take a hit like this.

In my opening statement, I mentioned the person who knew the restaurant down the street that it happened to them. The businessowner wanted to pay his employees, and he couldn't pay them because his balance was zero. So this is a serious threat.

The small business community needs help. This is a step in the right direction. Representative HANNA, whom we have all praised, really does deserve the praise because he took this and worked very hard to get this bill to the point where we are here tonight. Hopefully we are going to pass the bill.

So I think this is a great piece of legislation. H.R. 5064 would offer much-needed cybersecurity support to America's small businesses. It would also better coordinate the Federal Government's overall strategy in helping small businesses to thwart cyber attacks.

I would urge my colleagues to support this bill.

I yield back the balance of my time.

□ 2015

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. POLIQUIN). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5064, 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.

NICARAGUAN INVESTMENT CONDITIONALITY ACT (NICA) OF 2016

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on Financial Services be discharged from further consideration of the bill (H.R. 5708) to oppose loans at international financial institutions for the Government of Nicaragua unless the Government of Nicaragua is taking effective steps to hold free, fair, and transparent elections, and for other purposes, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

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

There was no objection.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5708

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 "Nicaraguan Investment Conditionality Act (NICA) of 2016".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) In 2006, Nicaragua, under President Enrique Bolaños, entered into a \$175,000,000, 5-year compact with the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC).

(2) After the 2008 municipal elections, the MCC stated that there was a pattern of decline in political rights and civil liberties in Nicaragua.

(3) In 2009, the MCC terminated the compact and reduced the amount of MCC funds available to Nicaragua by \$61,500,000, which led to the compact ending in 2011.

(4) According to Nicaraguan law, the National Assembly is the only institution allowed to change the constitution but in 2009, Daniel Ortega circumvented the legislature and went to the Supreme Court, which he controls, to rule in his favor that Presidential term limits were inapplicable.

(5) The House Committee on Foreign Affairs convened a congressional hearing on December 1, 2011, entitled "Democracy Held Hostage in Nicaragua: Part 1" where former United States Ambassador to Nicaragua Robert Callahan testified, "First, that Daniel Ortega's candidacy was illegal, illegitimate, and unconstitutional; second, that the period leading to the elections and the elections themselves were marred by serious fraud; third, that Daniel Ortega and his Sandinista party have systematically undermined the country's fragile governmental institutions".

(6) From fiscal year 2012 until present, the Department of State found that Nicaragua did not meet international standards of fiscal transparency.

(7) On January 25, 2012, a press statement from Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said: "As noted by international observers and Nicaraguan civil society groups, Nicaragua's recent elections were not conducted in a transparent and impartial manner, and the entire electoral process was marred by significant irregularities. The elections marked a setback to democracy in Nicaragua and un-

dermined the ability of Nicaraguans to hold their government accountable."

(8) According to the Department of State's 2015 Fiscal Transparency Report: "The government does not publicly account for the expenditure of significant off-budget assistance from Venezuela and this assistance is not subject to audit or legislative oversight. Allocations to and earnings from state-owned enterprises are included in the budget, but most state-owned enterprises are not audited. The supreme audit institution also does not audit the government's full financial statements. Nicaragua's fiscal transparency would be improved by including all off-budget revenue and expenditure in the budget, auditing state-owned enterprises, and conducting a full audit of the government's annual financial statements and making audit reports publicly available within a reasonable period of time."

(9) According to the Department of State's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015: "In 2011 the Supreme Electoral Council (CSE) announced the re-election of President Daniel Ortega Saavedra of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) in elections that international and domestic observers characterized as seriously flawed. International and domestic organizations raised concerns regarding the constitutional legitimacy of Ortega's re-election. The 2011 elections also provided the ruling party with a supermajority in the National Assembly, allowing for changes in the constitution, including extending the reach of executive branch power and the elimination of restrictions on re-election for executive branch officials and mayors. Observers noted serious flaws during the 2012 municipal elections and March 2014 regional elections."

(10) According to the Department of State's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015 in Nicaragua: "The principal human rights abuses were restrictions on citizens' right to vote; obstacles to freedom of speech and press, including government intimidation and harassment of journalists and independent media, as well as increased restriction of access to public information, including national statistics from public offices; and increased government harassment and intimidation of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations."

(11) The same 2015 report stated: "Additional significant human rights abuses included considerably biased policies to promote single-party dominance; arbitrary police arrest and detention of suspects, including abuse during detention; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions with arbitrary and lengthy pretrial detention; discrimination against ethnic minorities and indigenous persons and communities."

(12) In February 2016, the Ortega regime detained and expelled Freedom House's Latin America Director, Dr. Carlos Ponce, from Nicaragua.

(13) On May 10, 2016, the Supreme Electoral Council announced and published the electoral calendar which aims to govern the electoral process.

(14) After receiving the electoral calendar for the 2016 Presidential elections, the Nicaraguan political opposition raised concerns and pointed to a number of anomalies such as: the electoral calendar failed to contemplate national and international observations, failed to agree to publicly publish the precincts results of each Junta Receptora de Voto (JRV), and failed to purge the electoral registration rolls in a transparent and open manner.

(15) Nicaragua's constitution mandates terms of 5 years for municipal authorities,