

“Four Dead, Hundreds Detained After Venezuela Blackout”; and

“Venezuela Security Forces Kill, Punish Anti-Maduro Protestors.”

A few weeks ago, I traveled to the Venezuela-Colombia border, where I heard heartbreaking stories of friends and family members dying of starvation and treatable diseases, all while a brutal dictator does everything possible to prevent aid from being delivered.

I met with refugees at hospitals in Colombia and heard their harrowing stories of being on the verge of death due to a lack of medical care. There were a number of high-risk pregnancies as a result.

This is a humanitarian crisis that has bled through Venezuela’s borders, and it continues to grow.

This is personal for us in south Florida, where thousands of Venezuelans who have fled the crisis now call home. We will continue to push for TPS, because our response to this crisis must include supporting our friends and neighbors in south Florida and around the country.

Today, in addition to the Venezuela Arms Restriction Act, we will vote on bills introduced by my south Florida colleagues to support the people of Venezuela as they demand free and fair elections. We will vote on bills to provide humanitarian aid directly to the Venezuelan people and a bill targeting Russian influence in Venezuela and its impact on the United States.

Today, Congress will not stand idly by as this humanitarian crisis rages on. With the passage of the Venezuela Arms Restriction Act, we will move one step closer to fulfilling our obligations to ensure that no weapons originating in the United States are used to silence dissent through intimidation, repression, and execution. Congress, today, will affirm its commitment to the women and men of Venezuela who are fighting for democracy and a brighter future.

Mr. ROONEY of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I have no additional speakers.

In closing, I thank the authors of the bill. Congresswoman SHALALA just spoke about the depth and breadth of the horrible humanitarian crisis that we see on our doorstep in Venezuela. I would like to comment that the average Venezuelan has lost over 20 kilos of weight in the last 2 years and they haven’t had protein, so the whole country is starving to death, worse than any Warsaw Pact dictatorship has ever done.

Mr. Speaker, once again, I thank Congressman DIAZ-BALART and certainly Chairman Sires for their leadership on this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I call on all of my colleagues to enthusiastically support the bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. Sires. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume for the purpose of closing.

Mr. Speaker, I again thank Ms. SHALALA for her strong and timely

leadership on this legislation. It shows a strong commitment to the Venezuelan people and to our constituents who care so deeply about this issue.

The human rights situation in Venezuela is absolutely deplorable, and it is important that we take the common-sense steps in this legislation to help end the ongoing repression. Passing this measure will send an important message that Congress stands with the Venezuelan people.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. Sires) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 920, 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.

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO THE VENEZUELAN PEOPLE ACT OF 2019

Mr. Sires. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 854) to provide humanitarian assistance to the Venezuelan people, including Venezuelan migrants and refugees in the Americas and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill. The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 854

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 “Humanitarian Assistance to the Venezuelan People Act of 2019”.

SEC. 2. REPORT ON THE COORDINATION AND DISTRIBUTION OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO THE PEOPLE OF VENEZUELA INCLUDING STRATEGY ON FUTURE EFFORTS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State, in coordination with the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report outlining the coordination of humanitarian assistance to the people of Venezuela, both in Venezuela and throughout the Western Hemisphere, with nongovernmental organizations and international organizations operating in Venezuela or countries in the region to alleviate the suffering of the Venezuelan people.

(b) MATTERS TO BE INCLUDED.—The report required under subsection (a) shall include the following:

(1) A description of how and under what circumstances the following humanitarian assistance has been provided:

(A) Public health commodities for Venezuelan health facilities and services, including medicines on the World Health Organization’s List of Essential Medicines, and basic medical supplies and equipment.

(B) Basic food commodities and nutritional supplements needed to address growing malnutrition and improve food security for the

people of Venezuela, with a specific emphasis on the most vulnerable populations.

(C) Technical assistance to ensure health and food commodities are appropriately selected, procured, and distributed, predominantly through local nongovernmental organizations.

(2) An identification of United States Agency for International Development and Department of State best practices in delivering humanitarian assistance, particularly with regard to food assistance, and how such best practices are being utilized in providing humanitarian assistance to Venezuela and countries in the region.

(3) A description of current and anticipated challenges to distributing humanitarian assistance in Venezuela and countries hosting Venezuelan migrants.

(4) A description of efforts to ensure that humanitarian and development assistance for Venezuelans is coordinated with other United States bilateral assistance in the Western Hemisphere and does not result in duplication or omission of such other bilateral assistance.

(5) A description of how the pre-positioning and distribution of humanitarian assistance is being monitored and evaluated, the number of beneficiaries reached, an assessment of how humanitarian and development assistance is benefitting Venezuelan migrants inside and outside of the country, and what additional staff may be necessary to manage such assistance.

(6) A strategy for future efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to the people of Venezuela that includes a description of future efforts regarding the matters described in paragraphs (1) through (5).

SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF CONGRESS.

Congress strongly condemns all violent actions by the Maduro regime and Venezuela’s security forces to block and divert humanitarian assistance from entering Venezuela.

SEC. 4. COMPTROLLER GENERAL REPORT ON UNITED STATES EFFORTS TO PROVIDE HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO THE PEOPLE OF VENEZUELA.

Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to appropriate congressional committees a report assessing the impact of United States humanitarian assistance on the people of Venezuela, both in Venezuela and throughout the Western Hemisphere, including the total number of beneficiaries reached.

SEC. 5. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS FOR HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO THE PEOPLE OF VENEZUELA.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The President is authorized to provide humanitarian assistance to support the people of Venezuela, both in Venezuela and throughout the Western Hemisphere, in accordance with established international humanitarian principles.

(b) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that not less than \$150,000,000 is necessary for each of fiscal years 2020 and 2021 to carry out this section.

(c) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to the President such sums as may be necessary for each of fiscal years 2020 and 2021 to carry out this section.

SEC. 6. DEFINITION.

In this Act:

(1) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.—The term “appropriate congressional committees” means the following:

(A) The Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives.

(B) The Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives.

(C) The Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate.

(D) The Committee on Appropriations of the Senate.

(2) VENEZUELAN SECURITY FORCES.—The term “Venezuelan security forces” includes the following:

(A) The Bolivarian National Armed Forces, including the Bolivarian National Guard.

(B) The Bolivarian National Intelligence Service.

(C) The Bolivarian National Police.

(D) The Bureau for Scientific, Criminal and Forensic Investigations of the Ministry of Interior, Justice, and Peace.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. Sires) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. Rooney) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. Sires. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 854, the Humanitarian Assistance to the Venezuelan People Act of 2019, as amended.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this legislation, and I thank Ms. Mucarsel-Powell for her leadership on this important issue. From her first day as a Member of Congress, Ms. Mucarsel-Powell made it clear that supporting the Venezuelan people and making sure they receive the humanitarian assistance they need would be at the top of her agenda. I am proud to partner with her on this bill.

Over the last few years, we have watched in horror as the Venezuelan economy collapsed and rule of law in that country evaporated. Today, the man-made crisis created by the Chavez-Maduro regime in Venezuela has reached unthinkable levels.

Ninety percent of the Venezuelan population lives in poverty. Earlier this month, the country suffered another massive blow when its electric grid collapsed. This made it impossible to refrigerate food, and some Venezuelans could no longer receive necessary medical treatments.

These tremendous hardships have generated a mass exodus from Venezuela. Almost 10 percent of the population has fled the country over the last 3 years. The United Nations projects that by the end of this year, Venezuelans would make up the largest refugee population in the world.

As suffering is only expected to worsen, Congress must do everything it can to help the people of Venezuela. Ms. Mucarsel-Powell’s legislation addresses the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela head-on by authorizing new funding and requiring that USAID and the State Department develop a humanitarian assistance strategy for the Venezuelan people in Venezuela and throughout the region.

□ 1700

Other countries in the region and particularly our close allies, Colombia, have done so much to open up their hearts and their borders to the Venezuelan refugees. It is important that the United States help ease the burdens on our regional partners, and this bill is an important step forward.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. Rooney of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Humanitarian Assistance to the Venezuelan People Act introduced by my colleague from Florida (Ms. Mucarsel-Powell) and supported enthusiastically by our chairman, Albio Sires.

The humanitarian crisis in Venezuela is unprecedented in our hemisphere and is affecting the entire region. So far, more than 3 million Venezuelans have fled the criminal socialistic dictatorship of Maduro, whose mismanagement and repression are creating immense challenges for neighboring communities.

As Chairman Sires said, there are millions of refugees in Colombia, the United States, and around the world who fled from Venezuelan oppression.

This bill will ensure that we have a long-term strategy for U.S.-led humanitarian assistance to address the crisis so that it is coordinated effectively with local partners to meet the needs of its beneficiaries.

It condemns violent actions by the Maduro regime to block humanitarian aid from entering the country, and it authorizes funding necessary for future humanitarian assistance.

The administration has courageously led the humanitarian effort for the people of Venezuela and has received invaluable support from the Governments of Colombia and Brazil; and, more recently, the Government of the Netherlands has agreed to allow the nearby island of Curacao to be used as a hub to support future humanitarian aid.

The United States and this Congress must remain united in our support for the people of Venezuela in their struggle for freedom and democracy, especially as they struggle to survive without adequate food and basic medicines.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. Sires. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the author of this bill, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. Mucarsel-Powell).

Ms. Mucarsel-Powell. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. Sires) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. Rooney).

Nicolas Maduro is an illegitimate president. As a result of his brutal dictatorship, the Venezuelan people are suffering in one of the worst humanitarian crises in the Western Hemisphere.

Without basic food and medicine, people are starving and dying. As many as 3.4 million Venezuelans have left the country and migrated to neighboring countries, which are having immense difficulty absorbing such high volumes of migrants.

My bill would help alleviate the pain of the Venezuelan people by providing humanitarian assistance in accordance with established international humanitarian principles to those within the country and in the region. It gives Congress the authority to provide as much funding as is necessary to address the crisis in both 2020 and 2021, with no less than \$150 million for each year.

It also requires the State Department and USAID to show the American people the most effective way to coordinate with nongovernmental and international organizations operating throughout the region, and the bill also requires the administration to submit a report to Congress assessing the impact of U.S. humanitarian assistance.

Maduro has proven that he is willing to let his own people suffer and die rather than accept international aid. It is not enough to provide USAID with the funds for this aid. The administration must show that they are strategically trying everything they can to get the aid to the Venezuelan people inside the country, not just leaving it at the border. That is what this bill will achieve.

Finally, the bill expresses Congress’ strong condemnation of all violent actions by the Maduro regime and Venezuela’s security forces to block and divert humanitarian assistance.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to support this important legislation.

Mr. Rooney of Florida. Mr. Speaker, we have no additional speakers.

I would like to thank the author once again, my colleague, Ms. Mucarsel-Powell, and my neighbor in the Cannon Building.

I would like to also thank, once again, Chairman Sires for his leadership in this area, and I enthusiastically encourage everyone in this Congress to support this bill and prepare for the day when we can get aid to the people of Venezuela.

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

Mr. Sires. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume for the purpose of closing.

I would like to once again thank the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. Mucarsel-Powell) for her remarkable leadership on this issue, which demonstrates her strong commitment to the Venezuelan people and to her constituents who care so deeply about this issue.

It is crucial that we stand with our partners and allies in the region to provide desperately needed assistance to the Venezuelan people and help relieve the burden that Colombians and Venezuela’s other neighbors have taken on over the last few years.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. Sires) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 854, 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.

EUROPEAN ENERGY SECURITY AND DIVERSIFICATION ACT OF 2019

Mr. Sires. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1616) to prioritize the efforts of and enhance coordination among United States agencies to encourage countries in Central and Eastern Europe to diversify their energy sources and supply routes, increase Europe's energy security, and help the United States reach its global energy security goals, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1616

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 "European Energy Security and Diversification Act of 2019".

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) EARLY-STAGE PROJECT SUPPORT.—The term "early-stage project support" includes the following:

- (A) Feasibility studies.
- (B) Resource evaluations.
- (C) Project appraisal and costing.
- (D) Pilot projects.

(E) Commercial support, such as trade missions, reverse trade missions, technical workshops, international buyer programs, and international partner searchers to link suppliers to projects.

(F) Technical assistance and other guidance to improve the local regulatory environment and market frameworks to encourage transparent competition and enhance energy security.

(G) Long-term energy sector planning.

(2) LATE-STAGE PROJECT SUPPORT.—The term "late-stage project support" includes support described in section 1421 of the Better Utilization of Investments Leading to Development Act of 2018 (also referred to as the "BUILD Act of 2018"; enacted as division F of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018 (Public Law 115-254)).

(3) INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTION.—The term "international financial institution" has the meaning given such term in section 1701(c) of the International Financial Institutions Act (22 U.S.C. 262r(c)).

SEC. 3. SENSE OF CONGRESS; STATEMENT OF POLICY.

(a) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that the United States has economic and national security interests in assisting European and Eurasian countries achieve energy security through diversification of their energy sources and supply routes.

(b) STATEMENT OF POLICY.—It is the policy of the United States to—

(1) advance United States foreign policy and development goals by assisting European

and Eurasian countries to reduce their dependence on energy resources from countries that use energy dependence for undue political influence, such as the Russian Federation, which has used natural gas to coerce, intimidate, and influence other countries;

(2) promote the energy security of European and Eurasian allies and partners of the United States by encouraging the development of accessible, transparent, and competitive energy markets that provide diversified sources, types, and routes of energy;

(3) encourage United States public and private sector investment in European and Eurasian energy infrastructure projects to bridge the gap between energy security requirements and commercial demand in a way that is consistent with the region's absorptive capacity;

(4) help facilitate a well-functioning market for energy resources in a way that benefits the energy security of the United States and European and Eurasian allies and partners of the United States; and

(5) help facilitate the export of United States energy technology and expertise to global markets.

SEC. 4. PRIORITIZATION OF EFFORTS AND ASSISTANCE FOR ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS IN EUROPE AND EURASIA.

(a) IN GENERAL.—In pursuing the policy described in section 3(b), the Secretary of State, in coordination with the heads of United States agencies that operate under the foreign policy guidance of the Secretary, shall, as appropriate, prioritize and expedite the efforts of the Department of State and such agencies in supporting the efforts of the European Commission and European and Eurasian countries to increase the energy security of such countries, including through—

(1) providing diplomatic and political support to the European Commission and such countries, as necessary to—

(A) facilitate international negotiations concerning cross-border infrastructure;

(B) enhance Europe's and Eurasia's regulatory environment with respect to energy; and

(C) develop accessible, transparent, and competitive energy markets supplied by diverse sources, types, and routes of energy; and

(2) providing support to improve European and Eurasian energy markets, including early-stage project support and late-stage project support for the construction or improvement of energy infrastructure, as necessary, to—

(A) diversify the energy sources and supply routes of such countries;

(B) enhance energy market integration across the region; and

(C) increase competition within energy markets.

(b) PROJECT SELECTION.

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of State, in consultation with the heads of agencies described in subsection (a), shall identify and, in accordance with paragraph (3), select energy infrastructure projects that would be appropriate for United States assistance under this section.

(2) PROJECT ELIGIBILITY.—A project is eligible for United States assistance under this section if such project is—

(A) related to—

(i) natural gas infrastructure, such as interconnectors, storage facilities, liquefied natural gas import facilities, or reverse flow capacity;

(ii) electricity transmission infrastructure, electricity storage projects, or smart grid projects;

(iii) renewable energy projects in wind, solar, tidal, or other forms; or

(iv) the improvement, rehabilitation, or construction of electricity generation facilities to increase the efficiency and reliability of electricity production; and

(B) located in a European or Eurasian country.

(3) PREFERENCE.—In selecting among projects that are eligible under paragraph (2), the Secretary of State and the heads of agencies described in subsection (a) shall give preference to projects that—

(A) improve the capacity of energy systems to efficiently transfer gas and electricity within and between European or Eurasian countries;

(B) have already been identified by the European Commission as being integral for the energy security of European or Eurasian countries;

(C) are expected to enhance energy market integration and transparency;

(D) can attract funding from the private sector, an international financial institution, the government of the country in which the project will be carried out, or the European Commission; or

(E) have the potential to use United States goods and services.

(c) TYPES OF ASSISTANCE.

(1) DIPLOMATIC AND POLITICAL SUPPORT.—The Secretary of State, in coordination with the heads of agencies described in subsection (a), as appropriate, shall provide diplomatic and political support to the European Commission and European or Eurasian countries, as necessary, including by using the diplomatic and political influence and expertise of the Department of State to build the capacity of such countries to resolve any impediments to the development of projects selected under subsection (b).

(2) EARLY-STAGE PROJECT SUPPORT.—The Secretary of State, in coordination, as appropriate, with the heads of agencies described in subsection (a), including the Director of the Trade and Development Agency, shall provide early-stage project support to projects selected under subsection (b), as necessary and in accordance with section 661 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2421).

(3) LATE-STAGE PROJECT SUPPORT.—The Secretary of State, in coordination, as appropriate, with the heads of agencies described in subsection (a), shall provide late-stage project support to projects selected under subsection (b), as necessary and in accordance with section 1412 of the Better Utilization of Investments Leading to Development Act (relating to the establishment of the United States International Development Finance Corporation).

(d) FUNDING.

(1) TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY.—Subparagraph (A) of section 661(f)(1) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2421(f)(1)) is amended by striking "\$48,000,000 for fiscal year 2000" and inserting "\$79,500,000 for fiscal year 2020".

(2) COUNTERING RUSSIAN INFLUENCE FUND.—Section 254 of the Countering Russian Influence in Europe and Eurasia Act of 2017 (enacted as title II of the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act; Public Law 115-44; 22 U.S.C. 9543) is amended—

(A) in subsection (a), by striking "fiscal years 2018 and 2019" and adding "fiscal years 2020 and 2021"; and

(B) in subsection (b), by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

"(7) To assist United States agencies that operate under the foreign policy guidance of the Secretary of State in providing assistance under section 4 of the European Energy Security and Diversification Act of 2019."

(e) EXCEPTION.—No United States assistance under this section may be provided to a European or Eurasian country that engages