

for our athletes to have the same courtesy, to be briefed in advance about the threats that they may face while they are in the host country at the Olympics in China.

Again, I want to thank the gentleman from New York for his support; Chairman ENGEL, my dear friend, for cosponsoring the bill, along with Representatives SHERMAN, SPANBERGER, and PHILLIPS.

I urge my colleagues to vote “yes.”

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

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Mr. Speaker, I urge a “yes” vote, 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 York (Mr. ESPAILLAT) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 8405.

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.

BELARUS DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND SOVEREIGNTY ACT OF 2020

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 8438) to reauthorize the Belarus Democracy Act of 2004, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 8438

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 “Belarus Democracy, Human Rights, and Sovereignty Act of 2020”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Section 2 of the Belarus Democracy Act of 2004 (Public Law 109-480; 22 U.S.C. 5811 note) is amended to read as follows:

“SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

“Congress finds the following:

“(1) The Government of Belarus, led by Alyaksandr Lukashenka, continues to engage in a pattern of clear and persistent violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

“(2) The Government of Belarus, led by Alyaksandr Lukashenka, continues to engage in a pattern of clear and uncorrected violations of basic principles of democratic governance, including through a series of fundamentally flawed presidential and parliamentary elections undermining the legitimacy of executive and legislative authority in that country.

“(3) The Government of Belarus, led by Alyaksandr Lukashenka, continues to subject thousands of pro-democracy political activists and peaceful protesters to harassment, beatings, and imprisonment, particularly as a result of their attempts to peacefully exercise their right to freedom of assembly and association.

“(4) The Government of Belarus, led by Alyaksandr Lukashenka, continues to suppress independent media and journalists and to restrict access to the internet, including social media and other digital communica-

tion platforms, in violation of the right to freedom of speech and expression of those dissenting from the dictatorship of Alyaksandr Lukashenka.

“(5) The Government of Belarus, led by Alyaksandr Lukashenka, continues a systematic campaign of harassment, repression, and closure of nongovernmental organizations, including independent trade unions and entrepreneurs, creating a climate of fear that inhibits the development of civil society and social solidarity.

“(6) The Government of Belarus, led by Alyaksandr Lukashenka, has pursued a policy undermining the country’s sovereignty and independence by making Belarus political, economic, cultural, and societal interests subservient to those of Russia.

“(7) The Government of Belarus, led by Alyaksandr Lukashenka, continues to reduce the independence of Belarus through integration into a so-called ‘Union State’ that is under the control of Russia.

“(8) On August 9, 2020, the Government of Belarus conducted a presidential election that was fraudulent and did not meet international standards. There were serious irregularities with ballot counting and the reporting of election results. The Government of Belarus also put in place restrictive measures that impeded the work of local independent observers and did not provide sufficient notice to the OSCE to allow for the OSCE to monitor the elections, as is customary.

“(9) After the August 9, 2020, presidential election, the Government of Belarus responded to the peaceful opposition protests, which are the largest in Belarus history, with a violent crackdown, including, according to the United Nations Special Rapporteur, the detention of more than 10,000 peaceful protesters as of September 18, 2020.

“(10) Thousands of employees at Belarusian state-owned enterprises, who have been seen as Alyaksandr Lukashenka’s traditional base during his 26-year rule, went on strike across the country to protest Lukashenka’s illegitimate election and the subsequent crackdowns, including at some of Belarus’s largest factories such as the BelAZ truck plant, the Minsk Tractor Works, and the Minsk Automobile Plant.

“(11) Women have served as the leading force in demonstrations across the country, protesting the police brutality and mass detentions by wearing white, carrying flowers, forming ‘solidarity chains’, and unmasking undercover police trying to arrest demonstrators.

“(12) After the August 9, 2020, presidential election, the Government of Belarus has sought to stop the work of the Coordination Council, which was formed by the leading opposition presidential candidate, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, to facilitate a peaceful transition of power by subjecting the Council’s senior members to violence, detention, and forced exile.

“(13) After the August 9, 2020, presidential election, the Government of Belarus restricted the free flow of information to silence the opposition and to conceal the regime’s violent crackdown on peaceful protesters, including by stripping the accreditation of journalists from major foreign news outlets, disrupting internet access, limiting access to social media and other digital communication platforms, and detaining and harassing countless journalists.

“(14) Before the European Parliament on August 25, 2020, Tsikhanouskaya stressed that a ‘peaceful revolution’ was underway in Belarus, and that ‘It is neither a pro-Russian nor anti-Russian revolution. It is neither an anti-European Union nor a pro-European

Union revolution. It is a democratic revolution.’.

“(15) Against the will of the majority of the Belarusian people, Russian President Vladimir Putin has propped up the Alyaksandr Lukashenka regime, including by offering security assistance, providing significant financial support, and sending Russian propagandists to help disseminate pro-regime propaganda on Belarus state television.

“(16) After the August 9, 2020, presidential election, the United States, the European Union, the United Kingdom, and Canada condemned the violent crackdown on peaceful protesters, refused to accept the results of the fraudulent election and called for new free and fair elections under independent observation.

“(17) On September 8, 2020, Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo said, ‘The United States, in coordination with our partners and Allies, is considering additional targeted sanctions to promote accountability for those involved in human rights abuses and repression in Belarus.’.

“(18) Following Alyaksandr Lukashenka’s September 23, 2020, secret inauguration, the United States, the European Union, numerous European Union member states, the United Kingdom, and Canada announced they did not recognize him as the legitimately elected leader of Belarus.”.

SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.

Section 3 of the Belarus Democracy Act of 2004 (Public Law 109-480; 22 U.S.C. 5811 note) is amended to read as follows:

“SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.

“It is the policy of the United States to—

“(1) condemn the conduct of the August 9, 2020, presidential election and crackdown on opposition candidates, senior members of the Coordination Council, peaceful protesters, employees from state-owned enterprises participating in strikes, independent election observers, and independent journalists and bloggers;

“(2) continue to call for the immediate release without preconditions of all political prisoners in Belarus, including all those individuals detained in connection with the August 9, 2020, presidential election, a leading opposition figure Maryia Kalesnikava, and United States citizen Vitali Shklyarov;

“(3) continue to support the aspirations of the people of Belarus for democracy, human rights, and the rule of law;

“(4) continue to support the aspirations of the people of Belarus to exercise their religion freely, including the head of the Catholic Church in Belarus Archbishop Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz who was barred from entering the country after criticizing Belarusian authorities;

“(5) continue to support actively the aspirations of the people of the Republic of Belarus to preserve the independence and sovereignty of their country;

“(6) not to recognize any incorporation of Belarus into a ‘Union State’ with Russia, as this so-called ‘Union State’ would be both an attempt to absorb Belarus and a step to reconstituting the totalitarian Soviet Union;

“(7) continue to reject the results of the fraudulent August 9, 2020, presidential election in Belarus, and to support calls for new presidential and parliamentary elections, conducted in a manner that is free and fair according to OSCE standards and under the supervision of OSCE observers and independent domestic observers;

“(8) refuse to recognize Alyaksandr Lukashenka as the legitimately elected leader of Belarus;

“(9) continue to call for the fulfillment by the Government of Belarus of Belarus’s freely undertaken obligations as an OSCE participating state and as a signatory of the Charter of the United Nations;

“(10) support an OSCE role in mediating a dialogue within Belarus between the government and genuine representatives of Belarusian society;

“(11) recognize the Coordination Council as a legitimate institution to participate in a dialogue on a peaceful transition of power;

“(12) urge an expanded United States diplomatic presence in Belarus to advocate for the aspirations of the people of Belarus for democracy, human rights, and the rule of law;

“(13) continue to work closely with the European Union, the United Kingdom, Canada, and other countries and international organizations, to promote the principles of democracy, the rule of law and human rights in Belarus; and

“(14) remain open to reevaluating United States policy toward Belarus as warranted by demonstrable progress made by the Government of Belarus consistent with the aims of this Act as stated in this section.”

SEC. 4. ASSISTANCE TO PROMOTE DEMOCRACY, CIVIL SOCIETY, AND SOVEREIGNTY IN BELARUS.

Section 4 of the Belarus Democracy Act of 2004 (Public Law 109-480; 22 U.S.C. 5811 note) is amended—

(1) in the section heading to read as follows: “**ASSISTANCE TO PROMOTE DEMOCRACY, CIVIL SOCIETY, AND SOVEREIGNTY IN BELARUS.**”;

(2) in subsection (a)—

(A) in paragraph (1), by striking “European” and inserting “Trans-Atlantic”; and

(B) by redesignating paragraphs (2) and (3) as paragraphs (3) and 4, respectively; and

(C) by inserting after paragraph (1) the following:

“(2) To assist the people of Belarus in building the sovereignty and independence of their country.”;

(3) in subsection (b)—

(A) by inserting “and Belarusian groups outside of Belarus” after “indigenous Belarusian groups”; and

(B) by inserting “and Belarusian sovereignty” before the period at the end;

(4) in subsection (c)—

(A) by striking paragraph (8);

(B) by redesignating paragraphs (3) through (7) as paragraphs (4) through (8), respectively;

(C) by inserting after paragraph (2) the following:

“(3) countering internet censorship and repressive surveillance technology that seek to limit free association, control access to information, and prevent citizens from exercising their rights to free speech.”;

(D) in paragraph (8) (as redesignated), by striking “and” at the end; and

(E) by adding at the end the following:

“(9) supporting the work of women advocating freedom, human rights, and human progress;

“(10) supporting the development of Belarusian language education;

“(11) enhancing the development of the private sector, particularly the information technology sector, and its role in the economy of Belarus, including by increasing the capacity of private sector actors, developing business support organizations, offering entrepreneurship training, and expanding access to finance for small and medium enterprises;

“(12) supporting political refugees in neighboring European countries fleeing the crackdown in Belarus;

“(13) supporting the gathering of evidence on and investigating of the human rights abuses in Belarus;

“(14) supporting the public health response, including filling the information void, in Belarus during the COVID-19 pandemic; and

“(15) other activities consistent with the purposes of this Act.”;

(5) by redesignating subsection (d) as subsection (g);

(6) by inserting after subsection (c) the following:

“(d) **SENSE OF CONGRESS.**—It is the sense of Congress that, in light of the political crisis in Belarus and the unprecedented mobilization of the Belarusian people, United States foreign assistance to Belarusian civil society should be reevaluated and increased to carry out the purposes described in subsection (a) and to include the activities described in subsection (c).

“(e) **COORDINATION WITH EUROPEAN PARTNERS.**—In order to maximize impact, eliminate duplication, and further the achievement of the purposes described in subsection (a), the Secretary of State shall ensure coordination with the European Union and its institutions, the governments of countries that are members of the European Union, the United Kingdom, and Canada.

“(f) **REPORT ON ASSISTANCE.**—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of the Belarus Democracy, Human Rights, and Sovereignty Act of 2020, the Secretary of State, acting through the Office of the Coordinator of U.S. Assistance to Europe and Eurasia, and in coordination with the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report on the programs and activities carried out to achieve the purposes described in subsection (a), including an assessment of whether or not progress was made in achieving those purposes.”; and

(7) in subsection (g) (as redesignated)—

(A) by striking “**AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS**” and all that follows through “There are” and inserting “**AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**—There are”;

(B) by striking “fiscal years 2007 and 2008” and inserting “fiscal years 2021 and 2022”;

and

(C) by striking paragraph (2).

SEC. 5. INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTING, INTERNET FREEDOM, AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION IN BELARUS.

Section 5 of the Belarus Democracy Act of 2004 (Public Law 109-480; 22 U.S.C. 5811 note) is amended to read as follows:

“SEC. 5. INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTING, INTERNET FREEDOM, AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION IN BELARUS.

“(a) **SENSE OF CONGRESS.**—It is the sense of Congress that—

“(1) the President should support and reallocate resources to radio, television, and internet broadcasting in languages spoken in Belarus by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty to the people of Belarus;

“(2) the United States should also support other independent media providing objective information to the Belarusian people, particularly in the Belarusian language;

“(3) the President should provide the United States Agency for Global Media with a surge capacity (as such term is defined in section 316 of the United States International Broadcasting Act (22 U.S.C. 6216)) for programs and activities in Belarus;

“(4) the Chief Executive Officer of the United States Agency for Global Media, working through the Open Technology Fund and in coordination with the Secretary of State, should expand and prioritize efforts to provide anti-censorship technology and services to journalists and civil society in Belarus in order to enhance their ability to safely access or share digital news and information without fear of repercussions or surveillance; and

“(5) the United States should continue to condemn the Belarusian authorities’ crackdown on independent media, including the harassment and mass detentions of independent and foreign journalists and the denial of accreditation.

“(b) **STRATEGY TO PROMOTE EXPANDED BROADCASTING, INTERNET FREEDOM, AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION IN BELARUS.**—

“(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than 120 days after the date of the enactment of the Belarus Democracy, Human Rights, and Sovereignty Act of 2020, the Chief Executive Officer of the United States Agency for Global Media and the Secretary of State shall jointly submit to the appropriate congressional committees a comprehensive strategy, including a cost estimate, to carry out the following:

“(A) Expand independent radio, television, live stream, and social network broadcasting and communications in Belarus to provide news and information, particularly in the Belarusian language, that is credible, comprehensive, and accurate.

“(B) Support the development and use of anti-censorship and circumvention technologies by the Open Technology Fund and the Bureau of Democracy Human Rights and Labor that enable the citizens of Belarus to communicate securely and undertake internet activities without interference from the Government of Belarus.

“(C) Assist efforts to overcome attempts by the Government of Belarus to disrupt internet access and block content online.

“(D) Monitor the cooperation of the Government of Belarus with any foreign government or organization for purposes related to the censorship or surveillance of the internet, including an assessment of any such cooperation in the preceding ten years.

“(E) Monitor the purchase or receipt by the Government of Belarus of any technology or training from any foreign government or organization for purposes related to the censorship or surveillance of the internet, including an assessment of any such purchase or receipt in the preceding ten years.

“(F) Assist with the protection of journalists who have been targeted for free speech activities, including through the denial of accreditation.

“(G) Provide cyber-attack mitigation services to civil society organizations in Belarus.

“(H) Provide resources for educational materials and training on digital literacy, bypassing internet censorship, digital safety, and investigative and analytical journalism for independent journalists working in Belarus.

“(I) Build the capacity of civil society, media, and other nongovernmental and organizations to identify, track, and counter disinformation, including from proxies of the Government of Russia working at Belarusian state television.

“(2) **FORM.**—The report required by paragraph (1) shall be transmitted in unclassified form but may contain a classified annex.”

SEC. 6. SANCTIONS AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT OF BELARUS.

Section 6 of the Belarus Democracy Act of 2004 (Public Law 109-480; 22 U.S.C. 5811 note) is amended—

(1) in subsection (b)—

(A) by striking “December 19, 2010” each place it appears and inserting “August 9, 2020”;

(B) in paragraph (2), by inserting “, peaceful protesters,” after “all opposition activists”; and

(C) by striking paragraphs (3) and (6) and redesignating paragraphs (4), (5), and (7) as paragraphs (3), (4), and (5), respectively;

(2) in subsection (c)—

(A) in the subsection heading, by inserting “AND RUSSIAN INDIVIDUALS COMPLICIT IN THE CRACKDOWN THAT OCCURRED AFTER THE AUGUST 9, 2020, ELECTION” after “BELARUS”;

(B) by redesignating paragraphs (4) and (5) as paragraphs (5) and (6), respectively;

(C) by inserting after paragraph (3) the following:

“(4) is a member of the Central Election Commission of Belarus or assisted the Commission in manipulating the presidential election of August 9, 2020;”;

(D) in paragraph (5) (as redesignated) to read as follows:

“(5) is a member of any branch of the security or law enforcement services of Belarus, including the KGB, Interior Ministry, and OMON special police unit, and is responsible for, or complicit in, ordering, controlling, materially assisting, sponsoring, or providing financial, material, or technological support for, or otherwise directing, the crackdown on opposition leaders, journalists, and peaceful protestors that occurred in connection with the presidential election of August 9, 2020; or”;

(E) by adding at the end the following:

“(7) is a government official, including at the Information Ministry, responsible for the crackdown on independent media, including revoking the accreditation of journalists, disrupting internet access, and restricting online content;

“(8) is an official in the so-called ‘Union State’ between Russia and Belarus (regardless of nationality of the individual); or

“(9) is a Russian individual that has significantly participated in the crackdown on independent press or human rights abuses related to political repression in Belarus, including the Russian propagandists sent to replace local employees at Belarusian state media outlets.”;

(3) in subsection (d)(1), by striking “the Overseas Private Investment Corporation” and inserting “the United States International Development Finance Corporation”;

(4) in subsection (e), by striking “(including any technical assistance or grant) of any kind”; and

(5) in subsection (f)—

(A) in paragraph (1)(A), by striking “or by any member or family member closely linked to any member of the senior leadership of the Government of Belarus” and inserting “or by the senior leadership of the Government of Belarus or by any member or family member closely linked to the senior leadership of the Government of Belarus, or an official of the so-called ‘Union State’ with Russia”; and

(B) in paragraph (2)—

(i) in subparagraph (A), by adding at the end before the semicolon the following: “, or an official of the so-called ‘Union State’ with Russia”; and

(ii) in subparagraph (B), by inserting “, or the so-called ‘Union State’ with Russia,” after “the Government of Belarus”.

SEC. 7. MULTILATERAL COOPERATION.

Section 7 of the Belarus Democracy Act of 2004 (Public Law 109-480; 22 U.S.C. 5811 note) is amended to read as follows:

“SEC. 7. MULTILATERAL COOPERATION.

“It is the sense of Congress that the President should continue to coordinate with the European Union and its institutions, European Union member states, the United Kingdom, and Canada to develop a comprehensive, multilateral strategy to—

“(1) further the purposes of this Act, including, as appropriate, encouraging other countries to take measures with respect to the Republic of Belarus that are similar to measures described in this Act; and

“(2) deter the Government of Russia from undermining democratic processes and insti-

tutions in Belarus or threatening the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Belarus.”.

SEC. 8. REPORTS.

Section 8 of the Belarus Democracy Act of 2004 (Public Law 109-480; 22 U.S.C. 5811 note) is amended to read as follows:

“SEC. 8. REPORTS.

“(a) REPORT ON THREAT TO SOVEREIGNTY AND INDEPENDENCE OF BELARUS.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 120 days after the date of the enactment of the Belarus Democracy, Human Rights, and Sovereignty Act of 2020, the Secretary of State, in coordination with the Director of National Intelligence, shall transmit to the appropriate congressional committees a report on the threat the Government of Russia poses to the sovereignty and independence of Belarus.

“(2) MATTERS TO BE INCLUDED.—The report required by paragraph (1) shall include the following:

“(A) An assessment of how the Government of Russia is exploiting the current political crisis in Belarus to push for deeper political and economic control of or integration with Belarus.

“(B) A description of the economic and energy assets in Belarus that the Government of Russia, including Russian state-owned or state-controlled companies, controls.

“(C) A description of Belarus major enterprises that are vulnerable of being taken over by Russian entities amid the country’s worsening financial crisis.

“(D) A description of how and to what ends the Government of Russia seeks to augment its military presence in Belarus.

“(E) A description of Russian influence over the media and information space in Belarus and how the Government of Russia uses disinformation and other malign techniques to undermine Belarusian history, culture, and language.

“(F) A description of other actors in Belarus that the Government of Russia uses to advance its malign influence, including veterans’ organizations and extrajudicial networks.

“(G) A description of efforts to undermine Belarusian language, cultural, and national symbols, including the traditional red and white flag and the ‘Pahonia’ mounted knight.

“(H) An identification of Russian individuals and government agencies that are significantly supporting or involved in the crackdown on peaceful protestors and the opposition or the repression of independent media following the August 9, 2020, presidential election.

“(3) FORM.—The report required by this subsection shall be transmitted in unclassified form but may contain a classified annex.

“(b) REPORT ON PERSONAL ASSETS OF ALYAKSANDR LUKASHENKA.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of the Belarus Democracy, Human Rights, and Sovereignty Act of 2020, the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State and the Director of National Intelligence, shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report on—

“(A) the total assets under the direct or indirect control of Alyaksandr Lukashenka, including estimated assets and known sources of income of Alyaksandr Lukashenka and his immediate family members, including assets, investments, bank accounts, and other business interests; and

“(B) an identification of the most significant senior foreign political figures in Belarus, as determined by their closeness to Alyaksandr Lukashenka.

“(2) FORM.—The report required by this subsection shall be transmitted in unclassified

form but may contain a classified annex.”.

SEC. 9. DEFINITIONS.

Section 9 of the Belarus Democracy Act of 2004 (Public Law 109-480; 22 U.S.C. 5811 note) is amended—

(1) by striking paragraph (1) and inserting the following:

“(1) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.—The term ‘appropriate congressional committees’ means—

“(A) the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Committee on Financial Services, and the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives; and

“(B) the Committee on Foreign Relations, the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, and the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate.”; and

(2) in paragraph (3)(B)—

(A) in clause (i), by inserting “members of the security and intelligence services,” after “prosecutors.”; and

(B) in clause (ii), by inserting “, electoral fraud, online censorship, or restrictions on independent media and journalists” after “public corruption”.

SEC. 10. DETERMINATION OF BUDGETARY EFFECTS.

The budgetary effects of this Act, for the purpose of complying with the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010, shall be determined by reference to the latest statement titled “Budgetary Effects of PAYGO Legislation” for this Act, submitted for printing in the Congressional Record by the Chairman of the House Budget Committee, provided that such statement has been submitted prior to the vote on passage.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. ESPAILLAT) and the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ESPAILLAT. 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. 8438.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge my friend, Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, for his hard work on this bill, along with our other colleagues who helped move this measure forward, Mr. MCCAUL, Ms. KAPTUR, Mr. KINZINGER, and Mr. KEATING.

In Belarus, Lukashenko’s illegitimate regime continues his brutal crackdown on the peaceful protesters of that country that have taken to the streets in historic numbers to protest the elections he stole back on August 9, 2020. It was the right thing to do when the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the EU worked together to impose sanctions of those responsible. But the people of Belarus still need our help.

This bipartisan bill makes clear that Congress will stand with the Belarusian people and against their oppressors, and that they will support

their long-term goals of building a freer, more democratic, and more western-facing Belarus. To support the citizens of that country, this bill authorizes assistance to promote democracy, human rights, and civil society. It also calls on the administration to ramp up our assistance efforts.

And for those trying to stifle the democratic aspiration of the Belarusian people, this bill imposes stiff new consequences. It expands the list of Belarusian authorities and complicit Russian officials who may be targeted by U.S. sanctions.

This bill is more than just words of support. It would make a real difference for the people of Belarus as they strive to build a better future for themselves and their country.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC, November 11, 2020.

Hon. MAXINE WATERS,
Chairman, Committee on Financial Services,
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN WATERS: I am writing to you concerning H.R. 8438, to reauthorize the Belarus Democracy Act. I appreciate your willingness to work cooperatively on this legislation.

I acknowledge that provisions of the bill fall within the jurisdiction of the Committee on Financial Services under House Rule X, and that your Committee will forgo action on H.R. 8438 to expedite floor consideration. I further acknowledge that the inaction of your Committee with respect to the bill does not waive any future jurisdictional claim over the matters contained in the bill that fall within your jurisdiction. I also acknowledge that your Committee will be appropriately consulted and involved as this or similar legislation moves forward, and will support the appointment of Committee on Financial Services conferees during any House-Senate conference convened on this legislation.

Lastly, I will ensure that our exchange of letters is included in the Congressional Record during floor consideration of the bill. Thank you again for your cooperation regarding the legislation. I look forward to continuing to work with you as the measure moves through the legislative process.

Sincerely,

ELIOT L. ENGEL,
Chairman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES,
Washington, DC, November 13, 2020.

Hon. ELIOT ENGEL,
Chairman, Committee on Foreign Affairs,
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: I am writing concerning H.R. 8438 the "Belarus Democracy, Human Rights and Sovereignty Act of 2020." In order to permit H.R. 8438 to proceed expeditiously to the House Floor, I agree to forgo formal consideration of the bill.

The Committee on Financial Services takes this action to forego formal consideration of H.R. 8438 in light of the mutually agreed changes to provisions within the jurisdiction of the Committee on Financial Services. We are also doing so based on our mutual understanding that, by foregoing formal consideration of H.R. 8438 at this time, we do not waive any jurisdiction over the subject matter contained in this or similar legislation, and that our Committee will be

appropriately consulted and involved as this or similar legislation moves forward with regard to any matters in the Committee's jurisdiction. The Committee also reserves the right to seek appointment of an appropriate number of conferees to any House-Senate conference involving this or similar legislation that involves the Committee's jurisdiction and request your support for any such request.

Finally, I would appreciate your response to this letter confirming this understanding, and I would ask that a copy of our exchange of letters on this matter be included in the Congressional Record during Floor consideration of H.R. 8438.

Sincerely,

MAXINE WATERS,
Chairwoman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC, November 11, 2020.

Hon. JERROLD NADLER,
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary,
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN NADLER: I am writing to you concerning H.R. 8438, to reauthorize the Belarus Democracy Act. I appreciate your willingness to work cooperatively on this legislation.

I acknowledge that provisions of the bill fall within the jurisdiction of the House Committee on the Judiciary under House Rule X, and that your Committee will forgo action on H.R. 8438 to expedite floor consideration. I further acknowledge that the inaction of your Committee with respect to the bill does not waive any future jurisdictional claim over the matters contained in the bill that fall within your jurisdiction. I will also support the appointment of Committee on the Judiciary conferees during any House-Senate conference convened on this legislation.

Lastly, I will ensure that our exchange of letters is included in the Congressional Record during floor consideration of the bill. Thank you again for your cooperation regarding the legislation. I look forward to continuing to work with you as the measure moves through the legislative process.

Sincerely,

ELIOT L. ENGEL,
Chairman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY,
Washington, DC, November 9, 2020.

Hon. ELIOT ENGEL,
Chairman, Committee on Foreign Affairs,
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN ENGEL: This is to advise you that the Committee on the Judiciary has now had an opportunity to review the provisions in H.R. 8438, the "Belarus Democracy, Human Rights, and Sovereignty Act of 2020," that fall within our Rule X jurisdiction. I appreciate your consulting with us on those provisions. The Judiciary Committee has no objection to your including them in the bill for consideration on the House floor, and to expedite that consideration is willing to forgo action on H.R. 8438, with the understanding that we do not thereby waive any future jurisdictional claim over those provisions or their subject matters.

In the event a House-Senate conference on this or similar legislation is convened, the Judiciary Committee reserves the right to request an appropriate number of conferees to address any concerns with these or similar provisions that may arise in conference.

Please place this letter into the Congressional Record during consideration of the measure on the House floor. Thank you for the cooperative spirit in which you have

worked regarding this matter and others between our committees.

Sincerely,

JERROLD NADLER,
Chairman.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 8438, the Belarus Democracy, Human Rights, and Sovereignty Act.

I greatly appreciate Representative CHRIS SMITH of New Jersey for championing this bill. He is so well known as a visionary for freedom around the world. I am also proud to join him along with my dear friend, Chairman ELIOT ENGEL, who has been such a valued champion of democracy and with whom I had the rare opportunity to visit Pyongyang in North Korea. Joining us are Representatives KAPTUR, KINZINGER, and KEATING as original cosponsors of this important bipartisan piece of legislation.

There is no question that Alexander Lukashenko rigged the presidential election in Belarus this past August.

Since then, despite the terror inflicted upon them by the Lukashenko regime, the Belarusian people have continued to peacefully protest in historic numbers. And their calls for new free and fair elections are only getting louder. Their courage is truly inspiring.

The Belarusian people know that a legitimate leader does not need to use violence, arbitrary detention, or torture to cling to power.

They know that a legitimate leader does not need to curtail freedom of expression and the right to peaceful assembly to silent dissenting views.

And they know that a legitimate leader does not need to block independent media, disrupt internet access, and expel and detain countless journalists to conceal the true scale of opposition to his rule.

It is far past time Lukashenko comes to understand this as well.

This bill reaffirms that it is the U.S. policy to refuse to recognize Lukashenko as the legitimate leader of Belarus. It also aims to assist the Belarusian people in regaining their freedom and restoring the country's institutions of democratic governments.

Moreover, we know that Vladimir Putin fears democratic movements rising up against fellow dictators in his backyard. Any Russian move to undermine the will of the Belarusian people or the country's independence must be met with severe consequences.

That is why this legislation provides the President with the necessary tools to hold accountable not only the Belarusian authorities responsible for the violent crackdown but also their Russian backers.

This bill will create the necessary conditions to allow the Belarusian people to chart their own future. As such, I urge all Members to join me in supporting its passage.

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

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I yield as much time as he may consume to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH), the very courageous sponsor of this bill.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend for yielding. I thank Mr. WILSON for his great work, and I want to thank my distinguished colleagues on both sides of the aisle, ELIOT ENGEL and MICHAEL MCCAUL. Thank you for your support in helping to get this legislation to the floor. I thank Chairman KEATING, as well.

Mr. Speaker, I urge swift enactment into law of this bipartisan bill called the Belarus Democracy Human Rights and Sovereignty Act of 2020, which I have introduced.

And here is why this legislation is absolutely needed right now; not next year, not when we come back, hopefully the Senate will take it up if it passes today, and I think it will, but we need this right now.

Many of my colleagues know, and perhaps they know it well, that Belarus was perhaps the nation most mired in the Soviet past, with an inefficient economy and a strongman autocrat, really a dictator, in charge for over two and a half decades, Alexander Lukashenko. Yet the indomitable spirit of freedom stirred among the people of Belarus, and when a patently false election—another one—was announced on August 9 declaring Lukashenko the winner, the people took to the streets. And they are still on the streets today.

The OSCE Moscow Mechanism reported November 5 that there is “‘overwhelming’ evidence that Belarus’ August 9 presidential election results were falsified and as ‘systematic’ human rights violations have been committed by the country’s security forces in response to the peaceful demonstrations that the vote sparked.”

Now, reports out of Belarus indicate that police are using increasingly violent tactics against these peaceful protesters.

The BBC summed it up yesterday in an article titled, “Belarus protesters battered, bruised, but defiant after 100 days,” which said in part, “opposition protesters remain defiant in Belarus despite police brutality, 100 days after they first took to the streets to denounce the reelection of President Alexander Lukashenko. Police in helmets and body armour throw women holding flowers and balloons into police vans.”

And, of course, then it only gets worse. “Officers tear-gas elderly people on a pensioners’ march. . . .

“Yet every Sunday thousands still pour into the streets of the capital Minsk, condemning what they see as Mr. Lukashenko’s fraudulent 9 August victory. . . .”

There is a report that points out, again a BBC report, “Alesya, a 31-year-old worker in the IT industry, regu-

larly attends the Sunday rallies. On 15 November, however, things turned nasty very quickly.

“When she arrived at the square,” she said, “where the march was supposed to start, it was already packed with security forces. As more people gathered, officers fired stun grenades and started hitting people with batons to disperse the crowd.

“They attacked us again and again. It was awful. They ferociously beat people, twisted their arms and took them away.

“She ran away into one of the courtyards following other protesters, but police in their minivans quickly caught up with them even there. She was saved,” she goes on, “by a stranger who hid her and several others in his house.”

□ 1530

She goes on to say, “It was like World War II, when people tried to hide Jews from the Nazis. It was terrifying, we were shocked.”

That particular march was called in memory of Roman Bondarenko, an activist who was so severely beaten while in detention, that he died in the hospital just last week.

Mr. Speaker, the Congress can and we must do our part in this crisis. The people of Belarus, especially the pro-democracy leaders, desperately need our help, and they need it right now.

As my colleagues know, the leading opposition presidential candidate, Svetlana Tsikhanouskaya, almost certainly won the election in August. She went on to form the Coordination Council.

The democratic opposition is united, it is smart, it is principled, tenacious, and it is extraordinarily brave.

Ms. Tsikhanouskaya ran a courageous campaign, but today is in exile in Lithuania, in Vilnius, where she continues to rally the Belarusian people and the world and demand that democracy and human rights for all people be given to her nation.

A couple weeks ago I read portions of a transcript of a hearing I chaired in 2011 after another fraudulent Belarusian election put Lukashenko back in power. Then as now, and on so many other occasions, Lukashenko’s bullies beat, jailed, assaulted, tortured, raped, and killed peaceful protesters, but now it is going on right as we meet here today as never before.

The big mistake of the past, fatigue or lack of commitment and perseverance by the international community, can’t be repeated this time. We can’t be outraged at first and then turn the page and say, “Now what?”

We need to have a determined effort to help these people who are struggling for democracy and human rights in their nation.

On two separate occasions, I would note parenthetically, I met with Lukashenko in Minsk and came away resolved to accelerate the struggle for democracy and freedom.

I was with a group of 11 Members, including some of our members on the committee, and he pointed to me, because I am the author of the Belarus Democracy Act of 2004, and said, “There is public enemy number one.”

That is how he thinks. Anybody who aspires for freedom and democracy, particularly against his brutal regime, is construed to be a public enemy. And for the people of Belarus, they go to jail, where they are beaten senselessly.

Our bipartisan bill, H.R. 8438, again, cosponsored by Mr. ENGEL, Mr. MCCAUL, Mr. KEATING, Mr. KINZINGER, and so many other Members of this House, updates, strengthens, and expands the Belarus Democracy Acts of 2004, 2006, and 2011, laws that I also authored, and renews the personal, economic, and visa sanctions on an expanded list of actors in the Belarusian Government, and now for the first time on Russian individuals complicit in this crackdown.

I would note parenthetically, the Magnitsky Act, the idea of personally sanctioning with visa denial as well as economic sanctions on individuals that led to the Global Magnitsky Act came out of the Belarus Democracy Act of 2004.

So it is an idea, it is a method of holding those who commit these abuses personally accountable.

When you sanction an entire nation, that has an impact, but innocent people do get hurt. This sanctions the individuals who are perpetrators of these heinous crimes.

Yesterday, Svetlana again called for the sanctions, just yesterday for the sanctions that are embedded in our bill. So the time to act is now.

The bill also has other provisions. It does call for new elections.

It recognizes the Coordination Council as a legitimate institution to participate in a dialogue on a peaceful transition of power. They are the ones we need to be talking to.

It calls for the release of all political prisoners, and that number rises by the day.

It supports the aspirations of the people to exercise their religious freedom. There has been a crackdown there as well.

It authorizes assistance to promote democracy in civil society in Belarus. On occasions in Minsk, I have met with those individuals. They are brave beyond words, because they always know somebody is lurking—the secret police—just waiting to haul them off to prison.

It unequivocally states that it is the policy of the U.S. “not to recognize any incorporation of Belarus into a ‘Union State’ with Russia.” Russia is using this crisis as a pretext to further manifest their monopoly of power. They would love—like they did in parts of Ukraine, South Ossetia, Abkhazia—to just take the whole of Belarus into their national boundary.

The bill requires the U.S. strategy to promote broadcasting, internet freedom, and access to information.

In addition, it gives much needed support to the Belarusian media and to the IT sector.

By passing this bill today followed by, hopefully, swift approval in the Senate and signature into law by the President, we not only reiterate, but significantly expand our support and solidarity with the great people of Belarus. We need to pass this bill and I respectfully call on our Senate colleagues to pass it as well.

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, again, there being no further speakers, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, for over 3 months, we have watched, being inspired, as the Belarusian people have peacefully demanded that their voices be heard and that new, free, and fair elections be held.

As we have seen, women dressed in white and carrying flowers have formed miles-long solidarity chains to protest police violence. Employees at state-run companies have gone on strike, despite the threat of losing their jobs. University students have risked expulsion to join the protests. State TV anchors have walked off the set, no longer able to support the regime's propaganda campaign. Thousands of courageous pensioners have marched in opposition to the Belarusian dictator.

Today, led by the very talented and visionary Congressman CHRIS SMITH, we must stand and send a strong message to these brave men and women that they are not alone and that the American people stand with them.

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

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Mr. Speaker, again, let me thank Mr. SMITH and other colleagues who have worked so hard on this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I urge a "yes" vote, 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 York (Mr. ESPAILLAT) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 8438, 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.

UKRAINE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM SUPPORT ACT

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5408) to oppose violations of religious freedom in Ukraine by Russia and armed groups commanded by Russia, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5408

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 "Ukraine Religious Freedom Support Act".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) Russia invaded the Crimea region of Ukraine in February 2014, continues to occupy and control that region, and has exercised control over part of the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine since April 2014 through non-state armed groups and illegal entities it has established, instigated, commanded, and supported, including with military and intelligence personnel on the ground from Russia.

(2) International humanitarian law, including the Geneva Conventions, to which Russia is a signatory, requires Russia to respect and protect the religious freedom of the inhabitants of the territory it occupies or controls, including through organized non-state armed groups and illegal entities it commands and supports, and holds Russia responsible for violations of religious freedom in this territory.

(3) According to the Department of State's International Religious Freedom Reports, and other reporting, violations of religious freedom in the Crimea region of Ukraine since Russia invaded and occupied the territory have included abduction, detention and imprisonment, torture, forced psychiatric hospitalizations, fines, restrictions on missionary activities, confiscations of property, including churches and meeting halls, expulsions and obstructions to reentry, denying registration of religious groups, vandalism, fines, and banning peaceful religious groups, and targeted groups have included Muslim Crimean Tatars, the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, formerly the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyivan Patriarchate, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, Protestant Christians, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

(4) According to the Department of State's International Religious Freedom Reports, violations of religious freedom in the part of the Donbas region of Ukraine controlled by armed groups commanded by Russia have included detention and imprisonment, torture, confiscation of property, including churches and meeting halls, physical assaults and threats of violence, vandalism, fines, restrictions on missionary activities, religious services, ceremonies, gatherings, and literature, and banning of peaceful religious groups, and targeted groups have included the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, formerly the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kyiv Patriarchate, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, Protestant Christians, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

(5) The International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, as amended by the Frank R. Wolf International Religious Freedom Act, requires the President to—

(A) designate a foreign country as a country of particular concern for religious freedom when its government has engaged in or tolerated particularly severe violations of religious freedom in that country over the previous 12 months;

(B) take one or more of the actions described in paragraphs (9) through (15) of section 405(a) of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6445(a)), or commensurate actions in substitution, not later than 90 days, or 180 days in case of a delay under paragraph (3), after the date of the designation of a country as a country of particular concern for religious freedom; and

(C) designate a foreign country on a "Special Watch List" when its government has engaged in or tolerated severe violations of religious freedom in that country over the previous 12 months.

(6) On December 18, 2019, the Secretary of State re-designated Russia for the "Special Watch List".

(7) The National Security Strategy of the United States issued in 2017, 2015, 2006, 2002, 2000, 1999, 1998, and 1997, committed the United States to promoting international religious freedom to advance the security, economic, and other national interests of the United States.

SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.

It is the policy of the United States to consider any alien who, while serving as an official of the Government of Russia, was responsible for or directly carried out particularly severe violations of religious freedom in the sovereign territory of Ukraine that Russia illegally occupies or controls, including through non-state armed groups and illegal entities it commands and supports, to have committed particularly severe violations of religious freedom for purposes of applying section 212(a)(2)(G) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1182(a)(2)(G)) with respect to any such alien.

SEC. 4. DESIGNATION OF RUSSIA AS A COUNTRY OF PARTICULAR CONCERN FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM.

For purposes of making a determination of whether to designate Russia as a country of particular concern for religious freedom under section 402 of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6442), the President shall consider any particularly severe violation of religious freedom in the territory of Ukraine that Russia occupies or controls, including controls through non-state armed groups and illegal entities it commands and supports, during the period of time that is the basis for the determination and designation, to be a particularly severe violation of religious freedom that the Government of Russia has engaged in or tolerated.

SEC. 5. DETERMINATION OF BUDGETARY EFFECTS.

The budgetary effects of this Act, for the purpose of complying with the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010, shall be determined by reference to the latest statement titled "Budgetary Effects of PAYGO Legislation" for this Act, submitted for printing in the Congressional Record by the Chairman of the House Budget Committee, provided that such statement has been submitted prior to the vote on passage.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. ESPAILLAT) and the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials on H.R. 5408.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to my friend from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON) for bringing forward this bill that shines a light on the egregious violations of human rights and religious freedom at the hands of Russian-led forces in Ukraine's sovereign territory.