

Whereas presidential elections were held in Belarus on August 9, 2020, under undemocratic conditions with reports of malfeasance on the part of Lukashenka's government, including early voting ballot stuffing, ballot burning, pressuring poll workers, and removing bags full of ballots by climbing out of windows;

Whereas incumbent president Alyaksandr Lukashenka declared a landslide victory in the election and claimed to have received more than 80 percent of the votes cast in the election;

Whereas the leading opposition candidate, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya—

(1) formally disputed the government's reported election results;

(2) explained that her staff had examined the election results from more than 50 polling places; and

(3) found that her share of the vote exceeded Lukashenka's share by many times;

Whereas, on August 10, 2020, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya was detained while attending a meeting with the Central Election Commission of the Republic of Belarus and forced to flee to Lithuania under pressure from government authorities;

Whereas, on August 11, 2020, Lithuanian Foreign Minister Linas Linkevičius announced that Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya was safe in Lithuania and has continued to be 1 of the strongest voices supporting the pro-democracy movement in Belarus within the European Union and globally;

Whereas, on August 11, 2020, the European Union High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, issued a declaration on the presidential election in Belarus stating that the elections were neither free nor fair;

Whereas, on August 18, 2020, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya announced the formation of a Coordination Council to oversee a resolution to the crisis in Belarus and a peaceful transition of power;

Whereas, on August 19, 2020, European Council President Charles Michel announced that the European Union would impose sanctions on a substantial number of individuals responsible for violence, repression, and election fraud in Belarus;

Whereas, on August 28, 2020, United States Deputy Secretary of State Stephen Biegun declared that the August 9th election in Belarus was fraudulent;

Whereas, since the sham election on August 9, 2020, tens of thousands of Belarusian citizens have participated in daily peaceful protests calling for a new, free, and fair election, and the release of political prisoners;

Whereas according to Amnesty International, on August 30, 2020, Belarusians held one of the largest protest rallies in the country's modern history in Minsk and in other cities, which was attended by at least 100,000 people who demanded the resignation of President Lukashenka and an investigation into the human rights violations in Belarus;

Whereas women have played a leading role in the protests, including by forming peaceful solidarity chains of thousands of Belarusians symbolically dressed in white;

Whereas more than 7,000 Belarusian citizens have been detained by government authorities, mostly for taking part in or observing peaceful protests, with many of these arrests followed by beatings and torture at the hands of Belarusian law enforcement;

Whereas authorities in Belarus have consistently restricted press freedom as part of the crackdown, including—

(1) the arrest of dozens of journalists, six of whom report for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty;

(2) blocking more than 50 news websites that were covering the protests;

(3) halting the publishing of two independent newspapers; and

(4) stripping the accreditation of journalists working for foreign news outlets;

Whereas internet access in Belarus has been repeatedly disrupted and restricted since August 9, 2020, which independent experts and monitoring groups have attributed to government interference;

Whereas after employees of state media outlets walked off the job in protest rather than help report misleading government propaganda, Lukashenka confirmed that he "asked the Russians" to send teams of Russian journalists to replace local employees;

Whereas Lukashenka appealed to Russian President Vladimir Putin to provide security assistance to his government, if requested, and Putin confirmed that a reserve police force was ready to be deployed if "the situation gets out of control";

Whereas the Belarus Ministry of Defense threatened to send the army to confront protestors, warning that in case of any violation of peace and order in areas around national monuments, "you will have the army to deal with now, not the police";

Whereas, according to the Viasna Human Rights Centre, at least 450 detainees have reported being tortured or otherwise ill-treated while held in incommunicado detention for up to 10 days, including through—

(1) severe beatings;

(2) forced performance of humiliating acts;

and

(3) sexual violence and other forms of violence;

Whereas at least four Belarusians have been killed at protests, and dozens of Belarusians who were detained during the protests are still missing;

Whereas, on or around September 6, 2020, the opposition leader, Maria Kalesnikava, and members of the Coordination Council, including Anton Ronenkov, Ivan Kravtsov, and Maxim Bogretsov, were detained by authorities who sought to forcibly expel them to Ukraine;

Whereas opposition leader Maria Kolesnikova tore up her passport at the Ukrainian border in a successful effort to prevent this expulsion, subsequently disappeared, and was discovered in a Minsk prison on September 9, 2020;

Whereas the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, done at New York December 19, 1966, was ratified by Belarus in 1973, guaranteeing Belarusians the freedom of expression and the freedom of association; and

Whereas, in 2006, President George W. Bush issued Executive Order 13405, titled "Blocking Property of Certain Persons Undermining Democratic Processes or Institutions in Belarus", which authorized the imposition of sanctions against persons responsible for—

(1) undermining democratic processes in Belarus; or

(2) participating in human rights abuses related to political repression in Belarus;

Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) finds that—

(A) the elections held in Belarus on August 9, 2020, were neither free nor fair; and

(B) the results announced by the Central Election Commission of the Republic of Belarus are invalid;

(2) stands in solidarity with the people of Belarus, including human rights defenders, bloggers, and journalists, who are exercising their right to freedom of assembly, freedom of expression, and rule of law;

(3) recognizes the leading role of women in the peaceful protests and pro-democracy movement in Belarus;

(4) condemns the unrelenting crackdown on, arbitrary arrests of, and violence against

peaceful protesters, opposition leaders, human rights activists, and independent media by authorities in Belarus;

(5) condemns the unjustified detention and forced or attempted expulsion of members of the Coordination Council in Belarus;

(6) demands the release of all political prisoners and those arrested for peacefully protesting, including those arrested before the August 9, 2020 election;

(7) applauds the commitment by foreign diplomats in Minsk to engage with Coordination Council member and Nobel Laureate, Svetlana Alexievich, and encourages an ongoing dialogue with her and with other leaders of the democratically-oriented political opposition in Belarus;

(8) calls on the Government of Belarus to uphold its human rights obligations, including those enumerated in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;

(9) calls on the United States Government to impose targeted sanctions, in coordination with the European Union and other international partners, against officials in Belarus who are responsible for—

(A) undermining democratic processes in Belarus; or

(B) participating in human rights abuses related to political repression in Belarus;

(10) encourages the United States Government to continue working with its partners in Europe, particularly the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, to support the people of Belarus; and

(11) supports—

(A) the continued territorial integrity of Belarus; and

(B) the right of the Belarusian people to determine their future.

SENATE RESOLUTION 690—DESIGNATING SEPTEMBER 2020 AS "NATIONAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT MONTH"

Mrs. FEINSTEIN (for herself, Mr. ENZI, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. YOUNG, Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, Mr. CARPER, Mr. BRAUN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Ms. HASSAN, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. HIRONO, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. MURPHY, Ms. ROSEN, Mr. BARRASSO, Ms. CANTWELL, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. MANCHIN, Mr. KAINE, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Ms. SMITH, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. MERKLEY, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. PETERS, Mrs. HYDE-SMITH, Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina, Mr. ROBERTS, Mr. CRAMER, and Mr. DAINES) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 690

Whereas investment in the education, training, and career advancement of the workforce in the United States, known as "workforce development", is crucial to the ability of the United States to compete in the global economy;

Whereas collaboration among Governors, local governments, State and local education, workforce, and human services agencies, community colleges, local businesses, employment service providers, community-based organizations, and workforce development boards provides for long-term, sustainable, and successful workforce development across traditional sectors and emerging industries;

Whereas middle-skill jobs, which require more than a high school diploma but not a 4-year degree, comprise 52 percent of the labor market, but only 42 percent of workers in the United States have been able to access

training at that level, creating a discrepancy that may limit growth in changing industries such as health care, manufacturing, and information technology;

Whereas 76 percent of business leaders say greater investment in skills training would help their businesses;

Whereas, during the first 6 months of 2020 in the United States—

(1) tens of millions of individuals filed for unemployment benefits;

(2) more than 50 percent of job losses were concentrated among workers earning less than \$40,000 per year; and

(3) workers with a high school diploma or a lower level of educational attainment were displaced from jobs at nearly 3 times the rate of workers with a bachelor's degree;

Whereas, in 2014, Congress reauthorized the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (29 U.S.C. 3101 et seq.) with overwhelming bipartisan support in recognition of the need to strengthen the focus of the United States on the skills necessary to fill jobs in local and regional industries;

Whereas the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (29 U.S.C. 3101 et seq.) supports employment, training, and support services for individuals with barriers to employment, including—

(1) individuals who are low-income;

(2) individuals who are out of work, including the long-term unemployed;

(3) individuals displaced by outsourcing;

(4) individuals living in rural areas or areas with persistently high unemployment;

(5) individuals looking to learn new skills; and

(6) individuals with disabilities;

Whereas the more than 550 workforce development boards and 2,500 American Job Centers are a driving force behind growing regional economies by providing training, resources, and assistance to workers who aim to compete in the 21st century economy;

Whereas ongoing State and local implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (29 U.S.C. 3101 et seq.) provides unprecedented opportunities to develop the skills of workers in the United States through access to effective workforce education and training, including the development and delivery of proven strategies such as sector partnerships, career pathways, integrated education and training, work-based learning models, and paid internships;

Whereas, in 2018, programs authorized under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (29 U.S.C. 3101 et seq.)—

(1) served nearly 6,000,000 young people and adults;

(2) exceeded employment targets across all programs; and

(3) helped more than 1,500,000 individuals, including English language learners, gain skills and credentials to help the individuals succeed in the labor market;

Whereas State programs established under the Wagner-Peyser Act (29 U.S.C. 49 et seq.)—

(1) ensured that more than 5,400,000 unemployed workers, including more than 500,000 veterans, had access to career services through American Job Centers in 2018; and

(2) are a foundational part of the workforce development system;

Whereas workforce development programs will play a critical role in addressing the expected 2,400,000 unfilled manufacturing jobs over the next decade;

Whereas community colleges and other workforce development training providers across the United States are well situated—

(1) to train the next generation of workers in the United States; and

(2) to address the educational challenges created by emerging industries and technological advancements;

Whereas participation in a career and technical education (referred to in this preamble as “CTE”) program decreases the risk of students dropping out of high school, and all 50 States and the District of Columbia report higher graduation rates for CTE students, as compared to other students;

Whereas community and technical colleges operate as open access institutions serving millions of students annually at a comparatively low cost;

Whereas the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Public Law 115-224; 132 Stat. 1563) supports the development and implementation of high-quality CTE programs that—

(1) combine rigorous academic content with occupational skills; and

(2) served approximately 12,500,000 high school and college students between 2018 and 2019;

Whereas there are more than 500,000 registered apprentices in the United States, and there is growing and bipartisan support for expanding earn-and-learn strategies to help current and future workers gain skills and work experience;

Whereas the federally supported workforce system and partner programs—

(1) have helped rebuild the economy of the United States and provide increased economic opportunities; and

(2) provide a pathway into 21st century jobs that support families while ensuring that businesses in the United States find the skilled workforce needed to compete in the global economy; and

Whereas workforce development is crucial to sustaining economic security for workers in the United States: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates September 2020 as “National Workforce Development Month”;;

(2) supports Federal initiatives to promote workforce development; and

(3) acknowledges that workforce development plays a crucial role in supporting workers and growing the economy.

SENATE RESOLUTION 691—EX-PRESSING SUPPORT FOR EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMS THAT FACILITATE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING DURING AND BEYOND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Mr. BLUMENTHAL (for himself, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. HASSAN, and Mr. KING) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions:

S. RES. 691

Whereas a positive school culture is important for students, teachers, and staff to feel safe, valued, engaged, included, and respected;

Whereas students face intense academic and social pressures in school, including stress, bullying, and social isolation;

Whereas students face increasing anxiety as the COVID-19 pandemic continues, as a result of—

(1) social distancing requirements and increasing social isolation;

(2) fear of illness for themselves and peers;

(3) uncertainty of the future for themselves and schooling; and

(4) financial insecurity that results in hunger or stress at home;

Whereas, when these concerns or childhood trauma are not addressed appropriately, anxiety, depression, social withdrawal, disruptive behavior, drug and alcohol abuse, and violence can result;

Whereas skills developed through social and emotional learning equip young people to handle the challenges they face and help them succeed not just as students, but as healthy and caring adults, productive workers, and engaged citizens;

Whereas social and emotional learning is defined as the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills associated with social and emotional competency, including the ability to—

(1) identify, understand, and manage emotions;

(2) set and achieve positive goals;

(3) feel and show empathy for others;

(4) establish and maintain positive relationships; and

(5) make responsible decisions;

Whereas social and emotional learning programs can be effectively integrated into schools through classroom instruction, both in-person and virtually, and other schoolwide activities that—

(1) provide instruction for school leaders, educators, and staff on social and emotional learning, so they can both model these skills for students and benefit from them personally and professionally;

(2) integrate social and emotional learning through family engagement and in the school curriculum, through instruction and, in some cases, playful learning;

(3) provide systematic instruction in which skills are taught, modeled, practiced, and applied in daily behavior; and

(4) establish safe and caring learning environments that foster student participation, engagement, and connection to their school community;

Whereas social and emotional skills are both teachable and measurable, and evidence-based social and emotional learning programs have already been successfully implemented in schools across the country for students in preschool through high school;

Whereas students exposed to social and emotional learning programs have improved academic outcomes, including greater motivation to learn and commitment to school, increased time devoted to schoolwork and mastery of subject matter, and improved attendance, graduation rates, grades, and test scores;

Whereas these positive outcomes increase in students who are involved in social and emotional learning programs by an average of 11 percentage points over students who are not involved in such programs;

Whereas social and emotional learning programs can mitigate the impact of childhood trauma and also result in reduced problem behavior, improved health outcomes, a lower rate of violent delinquency, and a lower rate of heavy alcohol use;

Whereas programs that increase student connectedness and raise awareness about social isolation have been shown to reduce bullying and improve school climate; and

Whereas social and emotional learning programs help young people appreciate the importance of developing and sustaining positive interpersonal relationships and inclusive communities: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) supports the goals of evidence-based social and emotional learning programs;

(2) encourages schools and communities to implement programs to facilitate social and emotional learning in both in-person curriculum and virtual curriculum; and

(3) encourages schools to conduct regular in-person and virtual training of their staff to ensure social and emotional learning programs can evolve, grow, and build capacity as needed.