

property for purposes of hazard mitigation are afforded deferral of gain recognition, rather than an unlimited income exclusion.

The exclusion under the bill applies to payments made to businesses because, unlike other grants that are not excludable because they are in the nature of income replacement, FEMA mitigation payments received by businesses are made to ultimately benefit the local community and Federal government.

An income exclusion is appropriate for FEMA mitigation grants as such grants are distinctly different from other government grants. As mentioned, FEMA mitigation grants are only awarded if the projects are determined to be cost effective for the government. In addition, in the case of FEMA grants, if an exclusion is not allowed and individuals choose not to participate in the mitigation programs, the government may face increased spending, not only on behalf of one individual, but on behalf of entire communities in some cases. Finally, in the case of FEMA grants, present law imposes an illogical result in that mitigation grants are not excludable from income, but if mitigation grants are not accepted and a disaster subsequently occurs, payments made by the government to individual property owners could then be excluded from income.

Generally, the proposal would have a prospective effective date. However, with respect to past mitigation payments where the statute of limitations has not expired, the President's proposal provides that the Treasury Department will have administrative authority to apply the policy proposed in the budget and embodied in H.R. 1134 to such cases. I strongly urge the Department of Treasury and the IRS to resolve existing cases in a manner consistent with this legislation so that taxpayers who have already undertaken mitigation will not bear the unexpected burden of extra tax liabilities.

H.R. 1134 will cut taxes by \$105 million over the next decade. FEMA estimates that mitigation projects over the past several years have saved our Nation nearly \$3 billion in disaster-related costs. Clearly, when one compares the price of H.R. 1134 with what we might pay in future relief efforts, this bill is worth moving forward and passing into law.

Mr. COLE of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1134. This important legislation prevents the IRS from taxing disaster mitigation grants provided by FEMA.

This legislation is necessary and urgent due to the IRS's recent decision that Federal grant money used to build tornado shelters is taxable. Oklahomans who received the grants were not given any prior notice that money received would be taxable. Nor did Congress ever express the intent that such grants were to be taxable. The IRS simply conjured up this decision out of thin air.

It makes no sense for the government to tax Federal money given to mitigate disasters. Disaster relief saves lives, limits damages and makes sense. Taxing the very grants that make this possible is not wise, and it is especially unfair given that this IRS decision will cost the taxpayers of Oklahoma \$29 million over 5 years. These FEMA grants were given to thousands of Oklahomans with the average grant in the amount of \$2,000. And, as I said earlier, the recipients were never advised that these grants would be taxable.

No revenue has ever been collected from taxing FEMA grants. The IRS's decision is

without precedent and reflects poorly on the career bureaucrats who devised this action. H.R. 1134 reverses this senseless bureaucratic decision and prohibits these grants from being taxed.

I want to thank the gentleman from Florida, Mr. FOLEY, the gentleman from Louisiana, Mr. JINDAL, the Oklahoma delegation and the Ways and Means Committee for making consideration of this legislation possible. I would urge Members to support passage of this legislation.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PETRI). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. FOLEY) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1134.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

HOUSE DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE COMMISSION RESOLUTION

Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 135) providing for the establishment of a commission in the House of Representatives to assist parliaments in emerging democracies.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 135

Resolved,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This resolution may be cited as the "House Democracy Assistance Commission Resolution".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

The House of Representatives makes the following findings:

(1) Since its founding, the United States has championed the expansion of democracy around the world.

(2) Indeed, beginning with the Continental Congress and continuing through the modern Congress, representative institutions have served as a critical component through which the American people have expressed their views on policy issues and through which the power of other government branches has been balanced.

(3) In his second inaugural address on January 20, 2005, President George W. Bush declared: "We are led by events and common sense to one conclusion: The survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands. The best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world. . . . So it is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world."

(4) Strong institutions, particularly national legislatures with proper infrastructure, are essential for democracies to mature and to withstand cyclical turnover in governments.

(5) Furthermore, the parliaments of emerging democracies are commonly comprised of new legislators, citizens from many walks of life, who face the challenges of creating new democratic systems without the benefit of previous legislative experience. The legislatures of these fledgling democracies often

lack training, equipment, or resources to carry out their work effectively.

(6) Many parliaments do not possess the necessary technology, such as modern computer equipment, software, or access to databases and electronic resources, to facilitate the timely flow of legislative information to lawmakers and legislative staff.

(7) Parliaments in fledgling democracies also frequently lack trained staff to provide nonpartisan policy information, to draft legislation, and to advise legislators on policy matters.

(8) Newly democratic parliaments may lack the resources to establish internal libraries, reference materials, and archiving capabilities for use by legislators and staff.

(9) From 1990 through 1996, the United States House of Representatives, in conjunction with the House Information Systems Office (later known as House Information Resources) and the Congressional Research Service (CRS) of the Library of Congress, provided equipment and technical assistance to newly democratic parliaments in Central and Eastern European countries, including Albania, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, and Ukraine, in an effort to develop and strengthen those institutions.

(10) This program, commonly known as the "Frost-Solomon Task Force", not only served the United States foreign policy goal of helping to establish democratic institutions in other countries, but also developed significant goodwill in the countries in which it was implemented. The program was designed to improve the efficiency of parliaments and the professionalism of their members and staff, as well as to increase transparency and accountability.

(11) A program similar to the Frost-Solomon Task Force would enable Members, officers, and staff of the House of Representatives to share their expertise and experience with their counterparts in other countries, in keeping with the declared policy of the United States to support the growth of democratic institutions, thereby undertaking what President Bush called "the idealistic work of helping raise up free governments".

SEC. 3. ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMISSION.

There is established in the House of Representatives a commission to be known as the House Democracy Assistance Commission (hereafter in this resolution referred to as the "Commission").

SEC. 4. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMISSION.

(a) NUMBER AND APPOINTMENT.—The Commission shall be composed of Members of the House of Representatives, the number of whom shall be determined by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, in consultation with the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives. Majority party members shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and minority party members shall be appointed by the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives.

(b) TERMS OF MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.—Each member of the Commission shall be appointed for a term that is concurrent with the Congress in which the appointment is made. Such a member may be reappointed for one or more subsequent terms in accordance with the preceding sentence.

(c) CHAIRPERSON.—The Chairperson of the Commission shall be designated by the Speaker of the House of Representatives from among the members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives under subsection (a).

SEC. 5. DUTIES OF COMMISSION.

(a) **ACTIVITIES.**—The Commission shall work with the parliaments of selected countries, as determined pursuant to subsection (b)(4), on a frequent and regular basis in order to—

(1) enable Members, officers, and staff of the House of Representatives and congressional support agencies to provide expert advice to members and staff of the parliaments of selected countries;

(2) enable members and staff of parliaments of selected countries to visit the House of Representatives and its support agencies to learn about their operations first-hand; and

(3) provide recommendations to the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development regarding the provision of material assistance, such as modern automation and office systems, information technology, and library supplies, that the Commission determines is needed by the parliament of a selected country in order to improve the efficiency and transparency of its work, and to oversee the provision of such assistance.

(b) STUDY.—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—In order to carry out the activities described in subsection (a), the Commission shall conduct on an annual basis (or more frequently if necessary) a study on the feasibility of programs of assistance for parliaments of countries described in paragraph (2) for the purpose of strengthening the parliamentary infrastructure of such countries. The Commission shall designate those countries described in paragraph (2) with respect to which a study will be conducted under this subsection. The study shall assess—

(A) the independent and substantive role that each parliament plays, or could reasonably be expected to play, in the legislative process and government oversight;

(B) the potential benefit to each parliament of expert advice from Members and staff of the House of Representatives in areas such as the development of research services and legislative information systems, parliamentary procedure, committee operations, budget process, government oversight, and constituent services; and

(C) the need in each parliament for material assistance, such as modern automation and office systems, information technology, and research materials, in order to improve efficiency and transparency.

(2) **COUNTRIES DESCRIBED.**—The countries referred to in paragraph (1) are countries that have established or are developing democratic parliaments which would benefit from assistance described in this resolution.

(3) **SENSE OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.**—It is the sense of the House of Representatives that the countries described in paragraph (2) with respect to which studies will be conducted under this subsection should reflect a geographic diversity and over time should include countries from each of the following regions: Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, the Middle East and Central Asia, and the Western Hemisphere.

(4) **SELECTED COUNTRIES.**—From the countries studied, the Commission shall select one or more parliaments that it recommends should receive assistance under the provisions of this resolution, based on the criteria in paragraph (1). Assistance may be provided under the provisions of this resolution to a parliament selected under this paragraph only if the parliament first expresses to the Speaker of the House of Representatives an interest to receive such assistance.

(c) REPORT.—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than September 30, 2005, and each September 30 thereafter until September 30, 2009, the Commission

shall prepare and submit to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives, the Committee on International Relations and other appropriate House committees, the Office of Interparliamentary Affairs of the House of Representatives, and the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, an annual report on the following:

(A) **RESULTS OF STUDY.**—The results of the study conducted pursuant to subsection (b).

(B) **COMMISSION ACTIVITIES.**—In accordance with the results of such study, a review of the activities of the Commission in the previous year and a proposal for the activities of the Commission in the following year, as described in subsection (a).

(2) **DEFINITION.**—In this subsection, the term “other appropriate House committees” means the Committee on Appropriations, the Committee on House Administration, and the Committee on Rules of the House of Representatives.

SEC. 6. ROLE OF THE COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—The Commission shall carry out the duties described in section 5 using the staff and resources of the Committee on International Relations, including the use of consultants, such as individuals with expertise in development of democratic parliaments, legislative systems management, legislative research, parliamentary procedure, related legislative matters, and technology systems management, as appropriate.

(b) **PARTICIPATION OF LEGISLATIVE BRANCH EMPLOYEES.**—At the request of the Commission, the head of any House office or congressional support agency may assist the work of the Commission by—

(1) detailing personnel of that office to the staff of the Committee on International Relations; or

(2) authorizing personnel of that office to participate in activities of the Commission.

SEC. 7. TERMINATION.

The Commission shall terminate on September 30, 2009.

The **SPEAKER** pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. **BARRETT**) and the gentleman from California (Mr. **LANTOS**) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. **BARRETT**).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. **BARRETT** of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the resolution under consideration.

The **SPEAKER** pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from South Carolina?

There was no objection.

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

First, I want to thank the distinguished gentleman from California (Mr. **DREIER**), chairman of the Committee on Rules, and the distinguished gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. **PRICE**) for introducing this legislation. I would also like to recognize the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. **HYDE**), chairman of the Committee on International Relations, and the gentleman from California (Mr. **LANTOS**), our distin-

guished ranking Democrat member, as original co-sponsors.

Last week, the Committee on International Relations unanimously agreed to ask the chairman to seek immediate consideration of this resolution by the whole House under suspension of the rules. I would like to thank the leadership for moving so expeditiously to schedule this debate. I would also like to remember the role played by one of our long-time colleagues, the very distinguished gentleman from Nebraska, Doug Bereuter. Prior to his retirement last year after nearly 26 years in the House, Mr. Bereuter worked closely with the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. **PRICE**) on this initiative. Doug Bereuter was a strong believer in helping to spread democracy to former dictatorships, a mission that he has continued to champion in his new role as President of the Asia Foundation. His commitment to interparliamentary relations was underlined by his service as president of the 26-nation NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

This resolution, in part, is of his legacy of the House of Representatives and to the expansion of democracy around the world.

Mr. Speaker, in his second inaugural address, the President of the United States, Mr. Bush, declared: “The best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world . . . So it is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and the institutions in every nation and culture with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world.”

The resolution before us would enable the House of Representatives to directly and personally answer the President’s call to support the growth of democratic institutions in every nation. House Resolution 135 creates the House Democracy Assistance Commission. This commission will allow Members and staff of the House of Representatives to work directly with their counterparts in new democracies around the world to help those parliaments play an independent and substantive role in the legislative process and government oversight. This commission would build on the legacy of the Frost-Solomon task force of the 1990s when the House worked with democracies then emerging in Central and Eastern Europe, helping their parliaments become independent, effective legislatures.

Today, with democracies spreading throughout the world, the House Democracy Assistance Commission would allow Members to personally undertake what President Bush called “the idealistic work of helping raise up free governments.” Through the House Democracy Assistance Commission, Members and their staffs from the House of Representatives will personally advise their counterparts from the parliaments of new democracies around the world both in their home capitals and here in Washington. Many of these

parliaments need assistance in areas like committee operations, government oversight, constituent relations, parliamentary procedure, bill drafting, and establishment of research services and legislative information systems.

In addition, when the commission identifies needs in developing countries, it can recommend that the U.S. Agency for International Development provide office equipment for information technology to enable those parliaments to become more efficient and transparent. Creation of the House Democracy Assistance Commission will enable the House of Representatives to personally answer the President's call to support the growth of democratic institutions in every nation.

I urge my colleagues to adopt this resolution.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution. I strongly welcome this resolution to establish a commission in the House of Representatives to assist parliaments in emerging democracies. At the outset, I want to pay tribute to the distinguished gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. PRICE), who has been a consistent and steadfast advocate of the establishment of this commission. I also want to commend the gentleman from California (Mr. DREIER), my fellow Californian and friend, who is the author of this resolution, and the gentleman from Illinois (Chairman HYDE) for his leadership in moving the resolution through committee. I also want to commend the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. BARRETT), our new colleague, for his work on this matter.

Mr. Speaker, our country has been the leading promoter of democracy from the very beginning of our Nation. It defines who we are as Americans, and it is rightfully a key and continuing element of our foreign policy.

In 1789, the year our Constitution went into effect and the year that George Washington was sworn in as our first President, the young United States supported the French Revolution. In 1848, the United States supported the uprising of the people of Hungary against the Hapsburg monarchy; and after Russia and Austria crushed that revolution, we welcomed to our shores Kossuth Lajos, the great leader of the forces of democracy in Hungary whose statue adorns our Capitol in perpetuity.

In 1918, our President Woodrow Wilson expressed the idea that it is in the national interest of the United States to encourage free and open and democratic governments. President Bush echoed that sentiment in his inaugural address earlier this year.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation provides for the establishment of a House commission to assist the new parliaments in emerging democracies. It is similar to the commission which was estab-

lished by the House of Representatives in 1990 as the former communist states of Central and Eastern Europe were emerging from Soviet dominance. Under the able leadership of our former colleague, Congressman Martin Frost of Texas, and then our late colleague, Congressman Gerald Solomon of New York, this commission worked with the Congressional Research Service and the Library of Congress to provide technical assistance and information to these new democracies in Central and Eastern Europe.

□ 1545

Our Commission played an important role in assisting the parliaments of these newly democratic states. This legislation establishes a Commission with a similar mandate to assist parliaments in newly emerging democracies in areas throughout the Middle East where we have recently seen the winds of democracy beginning to stir.

There are also parliaments in other parts of the world where assistance from the Congress can help to establish free and open and democratic practices that will strengthen the rule of law.

Mr. Speaker, we all know the need to break the grip of dictatorship wherever it exists, but that is merely the first step on a long journey. Without assistance to help in the establishment of institutions of democracy, countries in transition to a more pluralistic political culture will be subject to the risk of falling short of the aspirations of their citizens who promoted democratic values.

We in this body have a role, along with our democratic friends and allies, to help those who want assistance in strengthening legislative assemblies in many forms.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to support this resolution.

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

Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from California (Mr. DREIER), sponsor of H. Res. 135, the distinguished chairman of the Committee on Rules.

(Mr. DREIER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution. I want to begin by thanking my colleagues; the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. BARRETT) for his commitment to the effort of this resolution. Behind this resolution, of course, I want to thank my very good friend, the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS), for all of his efforts, and I appreciate his once again bringing to mind 1848, as he likes to regularly remind our Governor of California about what took place in 1848.

I also want to thank my good friend the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. PRICE), who as the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) said, has been working for a long period of time

on this. And of course Doug Bereuter, who is no longer serving in this House, but obviously put a lot of effort in this. And of course our former colleagues, Mr. Solomon and Mr. Frost.

I was privileged to serve on their task force in the early 1990s, and it is amazing when one looks at the success that we have enjoyed during that period of time. In fact, one of the greatest things that took place following our effort to establish those parliaments and put into place the expertise and the technical assistance and helping with constituent relations and demonstrating independence from the Executive Branch and all those great things as we worked with those fledgling democracies in Hungary and then Czechoslovakia and then Yugoslavia, obviously countries that have changed since that period of time, but Romania and Poland. It is amazing that it has not been necessary for the task force to be in place any longer. Why? Because we have seen following the efforts of that task force a great deal of success with those emerging parliaments, doing the very, very important independent thinking that parliaments need to do.

As the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. BARRETT) pointed out so well in quoting President Bush's inaugural address and then his State of the Union message, it is very clear that we have witnessed an explosion of democracies throughout the entire world in recent months, and the fact that we have seen this explosion underscores the importance of this resolution which will, at the direction of the gentleman from Illinois (Speaker HASTERT), call for the establishment of this Commission, and I want to thank Speaker HASTERT, and of course the gentleman from Illinois (Chairman HYDE) for their strong support of this effort as well.

To me, this is one of the most exciting things that we will be able to do as an institution for a long period of time in the coming months and years, and I will tell you why, Mr. Speaker. If one looks at the challenges that we face, we know that the establishment of democracies is critical to the potential for us to diminish the kinds of threats that exist in the world. Military threats, terrorist threats are diminished with the success of democracies. And we all know that one election does not a democracy make. Over the past several months, to the surprise of many, we have seen elections take place in some places that have never experienced elections before; Afghanistan, for example. Never before had we seen an election take place in Afghanistan.

We have just now seen for the first time in a long, long period of time free and fair elections in the Palestinian territories, and then of course the most heralded election, when 8½ million Iraqis, to the surprise of many throughout the world, actually exercised that right to vote. And when we saw the emergence of the Shiia population, many thought that they would

through the election process squelch the opportunity for the Sunnis and the Kurds to be involved in the process, when instead with this election having taken place the Shiia have been reaching out to try and hold Iraq together.

And so now, we, as an institution, the United States House of Representatives, have a wonderful opportunity to provide assistance to countries that have seen elections take place and have yet to see their parliaments really flourish, first be established and then flourish.

And then of course just in recent weeks, what is it that we have seen? As the Secretary of State said not too long ago, if one were to guess that 250,000 people would be on the streets of Beirut, Lebanon calling for independence, it would have come as a surprise to almost anyone, and yet that is exactly what we have seen.

And so these opportunities for democracies to take off are emerging all over the globe, and that is why the establishment of this Commission is, I believe, going to be critically important to help with the strengthening of those democracies through the talent and expertise that will be necessary for the parliamentarians in those democracies.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I believe this is a historic opportunity for the United States Congress to be involved in our direct association with democracy building and most specifically parliament building in those countries that are coming to the forefront, and we all hope that there will be even greater opportunities for the United States Congress to be involved in that democracy building in countries where we could not possibly even fathom it today.

That is why I hope that one day we will get to the point where this Commission will no longer be necessary too, when we see political pluralism, the rule of law, self-determination and the existence of democratic institutions globally, because we know that that will play a great role in ensuring the stability and the success and the freedom that I believe all mankind deserves.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to yield such time as he may consume to the distinguished gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. PRICE), the Democratic author of this resolution.

(Mr. PRICE of North Carolina asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Dreier-Price Democracy Assistance Commission resolution. House Resolution 135 will establish a Commission in the House charged with helping parliaments in emerging democracies play a more independent, transparent and representative role.

I am pleased that the gentleman from California (Chairman DREIER) will be taking the lead role on the Commis-

sion, and I look forward to working closely with him to make this Commission a success and to make it a worthy successor to the Frost-Solomon Task Force, which helped build the capacity of new parliaments in Central and Eastern Europe between 1990 and 1996.

The Frost-Solomon Task Force, under the leadership of our former colleagues Martin Frost and the late Jerry Solomon, went in at the ground level with 10 parliaments from former Soviet and Warsaw Pact states, providing them with the kind of basic resources and technological infrastructure required for any legislature to play a meaningful role in an emerging democracy—things like computers and other office equipment and reference materials for parliamentary libraries—and helping them establish the systems and procedures necessary to create an efficient and well-functioning legislature.

A bipartisan group of House Members was actively involved, as were key House and Library of Congress staff who offered extensive consultation.

I had the opportunity to participate in the activities of that task force, and to witness firsthand the positive impact that it had, not only on the maturation of parliaments receiving assistance, but also in engendering a positive image of the United States, and of the U.S. House of Representatives, abroad. It was one of the most worthwhile and rewarding experiences I have had as a Member of this body.

The spread of democracy is continuing, and the U.S. Agency for International Development and its partners in the nonprofit world have been active in assisting new parliaments all around the world. Many other developed democracies have also gotten into the act of providing assistance to parliaments in emerging democracies.

But there is still an important role for the U.S. House to play. In fact, there is a role that I would argue the House is uniquely positioned to play. After all, the U.S. House is the oldest directly representative democratic body in existence in the world, one of two Chambers in the oldest democratic federal legislature in existence. We have been doing something that the world admires for a very long time. We should pass along the benefits of our experience to our colleagues in emerging democracies abroad, always in the spirit of realizing that, for all of us, the fullness of democracy is still a work in progress.

Our knowledge and experience as Members and support staff of this great institution are something we can share directly with our counterparts in emerging democracies, helping build their capacity to better perform the essential role that legislatures must play in democratic government, through oversight of governmental expenditures and military operations, constituent services, committee operations, information services and research.

Mr. Speaker, today is the culmination of 2 years of hard work, starting in early 2003 when I first began talking with Representative Doug Bereuter about resuming the work of the Frost-Solomon Task Force. We spent a lot of time talking with USAID, with Frost-Solomon Task Force veterans and with other stakeholders, trying to figure out the best way to move forward, how to ensure that the Commission's work did not duplicate other assistance efforts and in fact complemented them with the unique contribution that House Members could make.

We introduced the first version of this resolution, H. Res. 543, a little over a year ago, and a second improved version, H. Res. 642, last summer. Both resolutions were approved by the House Committee on International Relations, but there were still some refinements needed to get the consensus needed to move the resolution to the floor. We have now been able to make those refinements, thanks to the support and feedback we received from Scott Palmer and other staff members of the Office of the Speaker.

I want to thank the Speaker and the minority leader for lending their support to this enterprise, along with the gentleman from Illinois (Chairman HYDE) and the ranking minority member, the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) of the Committee on International Relations.

John Lis, a staff member of the Committee on International Relations, played a critical role in helping bring us to this point, and will continue to play the lead staff role in the Commission's work.

Francis Miko and Paul Rundquist with CRS, Dan Freeman with the Committee on International Relations, and Kristi Walseth, formerly of Representative Frost's staff, all of these played important support roles for the Frost-Solomon Task Force and have been extremely valuable advisers on the best way for a reconstituted Commission to work. We will continue to call on them for advice and, in some cases, to help carry out the Commission's duties.

I also want to thank successive members of my staff who put many hours and substantial effort into fine-tuning this resolution: Tom Rice, Marian Currinder and Darek Newby.

Over the course of the next several months, the Commission will be appointed by the Speaker and minority leader, and the staff will be evaluating candidate countries from around the world for potential participation in the Democracy Assistance Program. The Commission will eventually narrow that list down to five countries that will be invited to participate in the program beginning in fiscal year 2006.

Assistance will be provided through visits by Commission members, other interested Members of the House, and staff to participating countries, and members and staff of those parliaments will also have opportunities to come to

the United States to become more familiar with both State and Federal legislative institutions and practices.

We are working closely, and will continue to work closely, with USAID, the National Democratic Institute, and the International Republican Institute to coordinate the delivery of equipment and other related material assistance where the Commission identifies particular needs.

Mr. Speaker, this is an exciting endeavor, and one that I am looking forward to helping move forward. I hope that many of my colleagues will agree and find some way to contribute to the work of the Commission, to help support the spread and consolidation of democracy around the world.

□ 1600

The passage of H. Res. 135 is the essential first step, and I urge its adoption.

Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. McCOTTER), a member of the Committee on International Relations.

Mr. McCOTTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of House Resolution 135, for within its wisdom rests the realization a nation's democracy is never more imperiled than in its infancy. This realization and the extension of protections to emerging democracies are vital to our ensuring these newborn nations' first breaths of freedom burgeon into the full fruit of liberty.

Mr. Speaker, especially as we watch the ominous portents emanating from Russia's experiment in representative governments, we must ever remember the inception of a democracy is not an end. It is a beginning. And let us ever stand ready to assist those of our fellow human beings who are fitfully and finally breathing free.

I urge the adoption of this resolution.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MURPHY). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. BARRETT) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 135.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

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

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

URGING ADDITION OF HEZBOLLAH TO EUROPEAN UNION'S TERRORIST ORGANIZATION LIST

Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 101) urging the European Union to add Hezbollah to the European Union's wide-ranging list of terrorist organizations, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 101

Whereas Hezbollah is a Lebanon-based radical organization with terrorist cells based in Europe, Africa, North America, South America, Asia, and elsewhere, receiving financial, training, weapons, and political and organizational aid from Iran and Syria;

Whereas Hezbollah has led a 23-year global campaign of terror targeting American, German, French, British, Italian, Israeli, Kuwaiti, Saudi Arabian, Argentinean, Thai, Singaporean, and Russian civilians, among others;

Whereas former Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet called Hezbollah "an organization with the capability and worldwide presence [equal to] al Qaeda, equal if not far more [of a] capable organization . . . [t]hey're a notch above in many respects . . . which puts them in a state sponsored category with a potential for lethality that's quite great";

Whereas Hezbollah has been suspected of numerous terrorist acts against Americans, including the suicide truck bombing of the United States Embassy and Marine Barracks in Beirut in October 1983 and the Embassy annex in Beirut in September 1984;

Whereas the French unit of the Multinational Force in Beirut was also targeted in the October 1983 attack, in which 241 United States Marines and 58 French paratroopers were killed;

Whereas Hezbollah has attacked Israeli and Jewish targets in South America in the mid-1990s, including the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in March 1992 and the AMIA Jewish Cultural Center in Buenos Aires in July 1994;

Whereas Hezbollah has claimed responsibility for kidnappings of United States and Israeli civilians and French, British, German, and Russian diplomats, among others;

Whereas even after Israel's compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 425 (1978) by withdrawing from Lebanon, Hezbollah has continued to carry out attacks against Israel and its citizens;

Whereas Hezbollah has expanded its operations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, providing training, financing and weapons to Palestinian terrorist organizations on the European Union terrorist list, including the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine;

Whereas in 2004 Hezbollah instigated, financed, or played a role in implementing a significant number of Palestinian terrorist attacks against Israeli targets;

Whereas the European Union agreed by consensus to classify Hamas as a terrorist organization for purposes of prohibiting funding from the European Union to Hamas;

Whereas the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003 (Public Law 108-175) urges the Government of Lebanon to assert the sovereignty of the Lebanese state over all of its territory and to evict all terrorist and foreign forces from southern Lebanon, including Hezbollah and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards;

Whereas, although the European Union has included Imad Fayiz Mughniyah, a key oper-

ations and intelligence officer of Hezbollah, on its terrorist list, it has not included his organization on the list;

Whereas the United States, Canada, and Australia have all classified Hezbollah as a terrorist organization and the United Kingdom has placed the Hezbollah External Security Organization on its terrorist list;

Whereas leaders of Hezbollah have made statements denouncing any distinction between its "political and military" operations, such as Hezbollah's representative in the Lebanese Parliament, Mohammad Raad, who stated in 2001 that "Hezbollah is a military resistance party, and it is our task to fight the occupation of our land. . . . There is no separation between politics and resistance.";

Whereas in a book recently published by the deputy secretary-general of Hezbollah, Sheikh Naim Qassem, entitled "Hezbollah -- the Approach, the Experience, the Future", Qassem writes "Hezbollah is a jihad organization whose aim, first and foremost, is jihad against the Zionist enemy, while the political, pure and sensible effort can serve as a prop and a means of support for jihad";

Whereas United Nations Security Council resolution 1559 (2004), jointly sponsored by the United States and France, calls upon all remaining foreign forces to withdraw from Lebanon and for the disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias;

Whereas in December 2004 the Department of State placed Al-Manar, Hezbollah's satellite television network, on the Terrorist Exclusion List, and in December 2004 the French Council of State banned the broadcasting of Al-Manar in France

Whereas France, Germany, and Great Britain, with the support of the High Representative of the European Union, have created a working group with Iran to discuss regional security concerns, including the influence of terror perpetuated by Hezbollah and other extremist organizations;

Whereas on March 10, 2005, the European Parliament voted overwhelmingly to adopt a resolution that stated "Parliament considers that clear evidence exists of terrorist activities on the part of Hezbollah and that the [EU] Council should take all necessary steps to curtail them."; and

Whereas cooperation between the United States and the European Union regarding efforts to combat international terrorism is essential to the promotion of global security and peace; Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) urges the European Union to classify Hezbollah as a terrorist organization for purposes of prohibiting funding from the European Union to Hezbollah and recognizing it as a threat to international security;

(2) condemns the continuous terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hezbollah; and

(3) condemns Hezbollah's continuous support of Palestinian terrorist organizations on the European Union terrorist list, such as the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. BARRETT) and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. BARRETT).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and