

gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 361.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BOOZMAN. 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 H. Res. 361.

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

There was no objection.

CALLING FOR FREE AND FAIR PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 326) calling for free and fair parliamentary elections in the Republic of Azerbaijan, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 326

Whereas the Republic of Azerbaijan is scheduled to hold elections for its parliament, the Milli Majlis, in November 2005;

Whereas Azerbaijan has enjoyed a strong relationship with the United States since its independence from the former Soviet Union in 1991;

Whereas international observers monitoring Azerbaijan's October 2003 presidential election found that the pre-election, election day, and post-election environments fell short of international standards;

Whereas the International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) in Baku, Azerbaijan, deployed by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe, found that there were numerous instances of violence by both members of the opposition and government forces;

Whereas the international election observers also found inequality and irregularities in campaign and election conditions, including intimidation of opposition supporters, restrictions on political rallies by opposition candidates, and voting fraud;

Whereas Azerbaijan freely accepted a series of commitments on democracy, human rights, and the rule of law when that country joined the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe as a participating State in 1992;

Whereas, following the 2003 presidential election, the Council of Europe adopted Resolution 1358 (2004) demanding that the Government of Azerbaijan immediately implement a series of steps that included the release of political prisoners, investigation of election fraud, and the creation of public service television to allow all political parties to better communicate with the people of Azerbaijan;

Whereas, since the 2003 presidential election, the Government of Azerbaijan has taken a number of positive steps by releasing some political prisoners and working toward

the establishment of public service television;

Whereas a genuinely free and fair election requires that citizens be guaranteed the right and opportunity to exercise their civil and political rights free from intimidation, undue influence, threats of political retribution, or other forms of coercion by national or local authorities or others;

Whereas a genuinely free and fair election requires government and public authorities to ensure that candidates and political parties enjoy equal treatment before the law and that government resources are not employed to the advantage of individual candidates or political parties; and

Whereas the establishment of a transparent, free and fair election process for the 2005 parliamentary elections would be an important step in Azerbaijan's progress toward full integration into the democratic community of nations: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) calls upon the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan to hold orderly, peaceful, and free and fair parliamentary elections in November 2005 in order to ensure the long-term growth and stability of the country;

(2) calls upon the Government of Azerbaijan to guarantee the full participation of opposition parties in the upcoming elections, including members of opposition parties arrested in the months leading up to the November 2005 parliamentary elections;

(3) calls upon the opposition parties to fully and peacefully participate in the November 2005 parliamentary elections, and calls upon the Government of Azerbaijan to create the conditions for the participation on equal grounds of all viable candidates;

(4) believes it is critical that the November 2005 parliamentary elections be viewed by the people of Azerbaijan as free and fair, and that all sides refrain from violence during the campaign, on election day, and following the election;

(5) calls upon the Government of Azerbaijan to guarantee election monitors from the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Azeri political parties, candidates' representatives, nongovernmental organizations, and other private institutions and organizations, both foreign and domestic, unimpeded access to all aspects of the election process;

(6) supports recommendations made by the Council of Europe on amendments to the Unified Election Code of Azerbaijan, specifically to ensure equitable representation of opposition and pro-government forces in all election commissions;

(7) urges the international community and domestic nongovernmental organizations to provide a sufficient number of election observers to ensure credible monitoring and reporting of the November 2005 parliamentary elections;

(8) recognizes the need for the establishment of an independent media and assurances by the Government of Azerbaijan that freedom of the press will be guaranteed; and

(9) calls upon the Government of Azerbaijan to guarantee freedom of speech and freedom of assembly.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN).

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. 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 H. Res. 326, as amended.

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

There was no objection.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 326 is a resolution calling on the government of Azerbaijan to ensure that their upcoming parliamentary elections in November are peaceful, free and fair.

In the most recent elections in Azerbaijan, the 2003 presidential elections, international election observers concluded that they fell well short of international standards. The observers found numerous instances of voting fraud, restrictions on political rallies and intimidation against political opponents.

Since that election, Azerbaijan has taken a number of positive steps, such as releasing some political prisoners, opening their airwaves to opposing viewpoints and allowing greater freedom of speech and assembly. However, much more needs to be done before the people of Azerbaijan and the international community can have confidence in the outcome of the November elections.

As stated in H. Res. 326, the government needs to take several steps to ensure fairness in the election process. First, it must permit the full participation of all opposition parties in the upcoming elections.

Second, and perhaps most importantly, the government of Azerbaijan must allow election monitors from the OSCE, Azeri political parties and other political organizations unimpeded access to all aspects of the election process. The government simply cannot pick and choose which organizations will be allowed to verify that the election is free and fair.

Finally, the resolution supports the international efforts to change the election code of Azerbaijan to provide all political forces with equitable representation in the country's election commissions.

Azerbaijan and the United States have enjoyed a strong, bilateral relationship since Azerbaijan gained its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. We look forward to this friendship growing even closer in the coming years. In the long term, however, the strength of the relationship between our two nations, as well as the stability of government in Azerbaijan, will largely depend on Azerbaijan becoming a more free and more democratic nation.

I therefore urge the government of Azerbaijan to hold free and fair elections, and I urge my colleagues to support 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.

Mr. Speaker, the Republic of Azerbaijan will hold parliamentary elections this coming November. Our legislation calls on Azerbaijan's government to hold orderly, peaceful, free and fair elections in the interests of ensuring the long-term growth and stability of the country. Our resolution calls for full and peaceful participation in the process by all opposition parties and urges the ample presence of election observers with unfettered access to ensure the credibility of the elections.

Our measure is necessary, Mr. Speaker, after Azerbaijan disenfranchised its citizens and made mockery of its promises to the international community to hold a free and fair presidential election in October 2003. After a campaign troubled by intimidation and countless irregularities and violent incidents on election day, election observers concluded that the vote in 2003 was one which was fraudulent and it resulted in an illegal government.

Since then, Mr. Speaker, the people of Azerbaijan have faced an increasing crackdown on what should be their rights in a civilized society. The government has continued to pursue opposition figures, to break up peaceful opposition rallies, and has failed to prosecute police who have attacked journalists documenting these events.

Mr. Speaker, we all recognize that Azerbaijan enjoys a good relationship with the United States. It is an important producer of oil and has a strategic position between Europe and Central Asia that has been valuable for our Armed Forces as they have conducted operations in Afghanistan. But we must ensure that Azerbaijan and other former Soviet States do not use their strategic assets to prevent democratic openings such as the ones we have seen in Ukraine, Georgia, and even in Kyrgyzstan.

Mr. Speaker, we all recognize that the countries of the former Soviet Union represent a spectrum in the transition from totalitarianism to pluralism. No one election is expected to guarantee that a country will shed a half a century of oppression, and every society that has faced such circumstances must build toward a new social compact that allows for freedom and liberty.

The resolution before us today recognizes that the Azeri government has released some political prisoners and recently taken some steps to allow for a greater degree of openness in advance of the upcoming elections. More still needs to be done to ensure that election laws in Azerbaijan are in consonance with international standards.

The Azeri people will soon have another chance to fulfill their aspirations and to move their country towards a full democracy. Our resolution ex-

presses the support of the United States for the Azeri people, and I urge all of my colleagues to support it.

Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to yield 3 minutes to my good friend, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN).

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. Speaker, let me thank the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) for yielding me this time and thank the committee for bringing out this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I am the ranking Democrat on the U.S. Helsinki Commission, and I very much appreciate this resolution, because I think it carries out the commitment of our Nation to make sure that Azerbaijan carries out its commitments it has made as a member state of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Ever since gaining its independence in 1991 from the former Soviet Union, Azerbaijan has been a country in which we have a great deal of interest in making sure that it develops its institutions for democracy. In 1992, it became a participating state in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Now, as Azerbaijan plans parliamentary elections for November, Congress must strongly encourage them to fulfill their commitments. The elections must be free and fair, opposition parties must be encouraged, freedom of speech and press must be protected and democratic ideals must be upheld. Azerbaijan's last elections held in 2003 failed to meet these international standards.

Since the 2003 presidential elections, the government of Azerbaijan has taken some positive steps by releasing some political prisoners and working towards the establishment of public service television. However, there remains much concern hindering democracy in Azerbaijan.

Let me just raise one example, the events of May 21, 2005. Azerbaijan officials arrested and incarcerated a group of peaceful protesters in the capital city of Baku. I join my colleagues on the Helsinki Commission in condemning this horrific event and calling on Baku to establish a safe forum for oppositional discourse and to curtail all political harassment.

We must encourage Azerbaijan's government to reform campaign election procedures to ensure their integration into the democratic community of nations. The Rose Revolution in Georgia, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine and the recent Democratic Revolution in Kyrgyzstan are widely symbolic of events that accelerate the future democratization of the former Soviet Republics.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution speaks to the priorities of this Nation, but also speaks to the priorities of all the nations that have made commitments within the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. I urge my colleagues to support the resolution.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the resolution introduced by

my colleague Representative ELTON GALLEGLY calling for free and fair elections in Azerbaijan this November.

Azerbaijan has been an ally of the United States since they gained their independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 and has played in integral roll, not only with issues involving Central Asian countries, but also on the war on terrorism.

However, Azerbaijan has yet to meet its full potential and its poor human rights record constantly overshadows any positive steps that the government has taken.

The 2003 election was won by Ilkham Aliyev by 77 percent, but the election results remain contentious. After the 2003 election the International Election Observation Mission in Baku, under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, OSCE, found numerous instances of violence by both members of the opposition and the government.

The election observers also found irregularities in campaign and election conditions, including intimidation, restrictions on political rallies by opposition candidates, and voting fraud.

Many people protested the election claiming it had been rigged. As a result these protests led to numerous arrests of the "investigators." After threats by international organization that Azerbaijan's membership in the Council of Europe would be re-evaluated, President Aliyev released 114 of the political prisoners.

I applaud my colleague for introducing H. Res. 326. While calling for a free and fair election in November, this bill would also work to guarantee opposition party participation, and freedom of speech—something that this country has lacked for many years.

I call upon my colleagues to pass this common sense bill and send a message to Azerbaijan to hold and free and fair elections, respecting the rights of all individuals as some of their neighbors have already done.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H. Con. Res. 326, of which I am an original co-sponsor, along with my colleagues Mr. GALLEGLY and Mr. WEXLER. I thank them for their initiative in crafting this resolution which calls on the Government of Azerbaijan to hold free and fair elections this fall.

Azerbaijan is an important country. It is located in a strategic region, is energy-rich and is a moderate Muslim state that enjoys good relations with the United States. We have a major stake in Azerbaijan's successful democratization and integration into Western institutions.

Unfortunately, however, OSCE monitors have not been able to certify an election held in Azerbaijan in the last 10 years as meeting international standards. During the October 2003 presidential election, clashes broke out between government forces and supporters of opposition parties who claimed election fraud. Afterwards, the authorities launched a country-wide crackdown on the opposition; only recently have Azerbaijan authorities begun to allow demonstrations again.

The upcoming parliamentary election—the first under the country's new, young leadership—is critical to Azerbaijan's progress towards the Western community of nations. It is a key indicator of President Ilham Aliyev's intentions: does he want to reform the system or to continue with same old, tired business as usual?

The stakes are higher than which parties and candidates get in Azerbaijan's parliament. Over the last 18 months, multi-colored" revolutions took place in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan. All were sparked by elections perceived by many voters in those countries as unfair, a view shared by OSCE observer missions. If Azerbaijan's election this November does not make major improvements over October 2003, there is a real chance of confrontation again, with unpredictable consequences.

I am deeply convinced that the stability we all seek in Azerbaijan is only possible through democracy. For that reason, the November election must be free and fair. Whoever wins, it is essential that Azerbaijan's citizens and the international community see the outcome as legitimate.

A key ingredient of fair elections is impartial election commissions. At this point, there are no such bodies in Azerbaijan. Since 2003, the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe, along with the OSCE's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, have consistently urged that Azerbaijan's election commissions, which are reliably pro-government, be reconfigured so as to "enjoy public confidence."

In fact, this issue goes back even farther—the Helsinki Commission, which I co-chair, held a hearing in May 2000 on the November 2000 parliamentary election, at which representatives of Azerbaijan's government and opposition testified. At that time as well, the composition of election commissions was one of the most heated points of contention between government and opposition.

Unfortunately, these differences have not been bridged. Azerbaijan's authorities have rejected the recommendations of the OSCE and the Venice Commission. I am extremely disappointed that Azerbaijan's parliament passed an election law on June 29 without incorporating key suggestions by the Venice Commission on election commissions and domestic monitoring.

With the law as it now stands, and with election commissions unchanged, the election will not be able to meet OSCE standards. It is already clear that the OSCE and the Council of Europe will not be able to give a passing grade to the election. Nor will the law enjoy public confidence in Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijani officials occasionally protest that there is not enough time between now and November to change the law. But lack of time is not the problem. They have had years to implement these recommendations—the problem is that they refuse to do so.

Nevertheless, I believe there is still time for Baku to do what is right. That is why I cosponsored this resolution. I call on my colleagues to support H. Con. Res. 326, which will convey to Baku that the U.S. Congress is closely watching and will draw the appropriate conclusions.

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

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I also have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) that the House suspend

the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 326, as amended.

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.

□ 1545

RECOGNIZING THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT IN POLAND

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 328) recognizing the 25th anniversary of the workers' strikes in Poland in 1980 that led to the establishment of the Solidarity Trade Union, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 328

Whereas, although Victory in Europe on May 8, 1945, resulted in liberty and democracy in many nations, Poland and other countries of Central and Eastern Europe fell behind the repressive Iron Curtain of the Soviet Union;

Whereas for more than four decades Poland and the nations of the Soviet Bloc struggled under authoritarian rule;

Whereas in June 1979, Pope John Paul II, the former Cardinal Karol Wojtyla, returned to his homeland for the first time and exhorted his countrymen to "be not afraid" of the Communist regime;

Whereas in July and August of 1980, Polish workers in the shipyards of Gdansk and Szczecin went on strike to demand greater political freedom;

Whereas workers' committees, led by electrician Lech Walesa, coordinated these strikes and ensured that the strikes were peaceful and orderly;

Whereas in August 1980, the Communist government of Poland yielded to the 21 demands of the striking workers, including the release of all political prisoners, the broadcasting of religious services on television and radio, and the right to establish independent trade unions;

Whereas the Communist government of Poland introduced martial law in December 1981 in an attempt to block the growing influence of the Solidarity movement;

Whereas the Solidarity Trade Union and its 10,000,000 members became a great social movement committed to promoting fundamental human rights, democracy, and Polish independence from the Soviet Union;

Whereas in February 1989, the Communist government of Poland agreed to conduct talks with the Solidarity Trade Union that led to elections to the National Assembly in June of that year, in which nearly all open seats were won by candidates supported by the Solidarity Trade Union, and led soon after to the election of Poland's first non-Communist Prime Minister in the post-war era, Mr. Tadeusz Mazowiecki;

Whereas the Solidarity movement ended communism in Poland without bloodshed, inspiring other nations under Soviet control to do the same and playing an important role in the fall of communism in Central and Eastern Europe;

Whereas on November 15, 1989, Lech Walesa gave an historic speech before a joint meeting of the United States Congress with the opening remarks "We the People. . .", which stirred a standing ovation from the Members of Congress;

Whereas on December 9, 1990, Lech Walesa was elected President of Poland;

Whereas the support of the United States and the Polish-American community was essential to the survival and success of the Solidarity movement; and

Whereas a bond of friendship exists between the United States and Poland, which is among the strongest allies of the United States, a contributing partner in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), a reliable partner in the Global War on Terrorism, and a key contributor in Iraq and Afghanistan: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) recognizes the 25th anniversary of the workers' strikes in Poland that led to establishment of the Solidarity Trade Union;

(2) honors the struggle and sacrifice of the citizens of Poland who risked their lives to restore democracy to their country and to return Poland to the democratic community of nations; and

(3) offers Poland as a model for other nations struggling to emerge from authoritarian rule and establish a flourishing representative government.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina). Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN).

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. 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 gentlewoman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 328 recognizes the 25th-year anniversary of the Solidarity movement in Poland and conveys our recognition of Solidarity's important role in setting in motion the liberation of the Eastern and Central European nations and the fall of the Soviet Union. It also honors the struggle and the sacrifice of the people of Poland who risked their lives to restore democracy to their country.

Solidarity began in the shipyards, with Polish workers refusing to submit to the tyranny of the Communist regime in Poland, even after 40 years of oppression. A local electrician, Lech Walesa, coordinated the Solidarity strikes and ensured that the strikes were peaceful and orderly.

After months of strikes, the Communist government yielded to the striking workers' demands, including the release of all political prisoners, the broadcasting of religious services