

Third, the bill makes discretionary the convening of an Accountability Review Board in the case of an incident involving serious injury, loss of life or significant destruction of property at or related to a U.S. Government mission in Afghanistan or Iraq. In lieu of such a board, the Secretary of State may conduct an inquiry and submit a report on the incident to the House International Relations and Senate Foreign Relations Committees.

Lastly, the bill amends section 904 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980 to enable the State Department to retain medical insurance reimbursements in the year in which they are collected, strengthening the Department's management tools and ability to provide emergency medical services for its employees abroad.

In conclusion, I urge my colleagues to support this bill. It gives our diplomatic service the resources it needs in this post-9/11 environment to promote U.S. interests and values abroad and to protect American citizens right here at home.

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

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume, and I rise in support of this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, this simple and straightforward bill amends certain authorities of the Department of State so that the Secretary can better manage that global institution.

Many of the provisions have already passed the House in one form or another. One provision of note is the authority for the United States to become a member of the Regional Emerging Diseases Intervention Center which is being established in Singapore. This regional institution, originally designed to address the threat of SARS that was recognized at the end of 2003, now can be a focal point for addressing issues arising out of the avian flu outbreaks that we have seen earlier this year.

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

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

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, to conclude, before yielding back, I do want to thank Chairman DAVIS from the Government Reform Committee for his cooperation because there were some issues of jurisdiction, and he acted in a very cooperative and collegial way to help make this legislation possible.

I would also like to thank Kristen Gilley for her fine work in working on this legislation, and to my good friend and colleague Mr. LANTOS as well.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr.

SMITH) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4436, as amended.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 4436.

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

There was no objection.

SENSE OF CONGRESS REGARDING NICARAGUA

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 252) expressing the sense of Congress that the Government of the United States should actively support the aspirations of the democratic political and social forces in the Republic of Nicaragua toward an immediate and full restoration of functioning democracy in that country, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 252

Whereas the United States is strongly committed to promoting democracy and the rule of law through the democratically elected government and the civil society of Nicaragua;

Whereas the Democratic Charter of the Organization of American States, of which the United States and Nicaragua are signatories, stipulates that "[t]he peoples of the Americas have a right to democracy and their governments have an obligation to promote and defend it";

Whereas after experiencing a revolution, loss of personal liberties, destruction of property, and economic instability a quarter century ago, the people of Nicaragua are committed to maintaining a democratic form of government that functions democratically and whose branches of government respect the rule of law and human rights;

Whereas in November 2001, during the last national election, approximately 90 percent of voters in Nicaragua turned out to vote, indicating a strong commitment to a free electoral process and self determination;

Whereas international observers, including representatives from the National Democratic Institute, the International Republican Institute, the Carter Center, and the Organization of American States, monitored the Nicaraguan elections of November 2001 and determined that the elections met minimum international standards and that the outcome reflected the will of the Nicaraguan people;

Whereas ex-President Arnaldo Aleman and Sandinista Liberation Front (FSLN) leader Daniel Ortega entered into an agreement, which is widely known throughout Nica-

ragua as "the Pact," to exploit the legislative powers of the National Assembly to undermine the Nicaraguan Constitution, the Presidency of Enrique Bolaños Geyer, and key institutions of representative democratic governance;

Whereas polls indicate that an overwhelming percentage of Nicaraguans oppose the Aleman-Ortega Pact, and tens of thousands of Nicaraguans have taken to the streets in the past year to call for an end to the Pact;

Whereas in September 2005, the Secretary General of the Organization of American States warned that the attempt by the Nicaraguan national legislature to strip President Enrique Bolaños Geyer's ministers and other senior government officials of their official immunity had created circumstances that would have made the country ungovernable and generated endless conflict;

Whereas with regard to the attempt by the National Assembly through the operation of the Aleman-Ortega Pact to undermine the privileges of the Nicaraguan executive branch, the Organization of American States urged, in the strongest possible terms, that "the parties concerned enter into a broad and constructive dialogue, free of pressures and threats" and that the parties "respect the mandate freely conferred upon President Enrique Bolaños Geyer and the other elected officials by the Nicaraguan people";

Whereas the National Assembly, in reaction to pressure from the international community, in October 2005, voted unanimously to delay until after the term of President Enrique Bolaños Geyer expires in January 2007, the enactment of these constitutional amendments by approving the Framework Law for the Stability and Governability of the Country (Framework Law);

Whereas, although the enactment and implementation of the Framework Law has reduced the political tensions in Nicaragua, the practical effect of the Pact remains largely intact as Arnaldo Aleman and Daniel Ortega continue to wield near total control over the National Assembly, the Supreme Court, the Electoral Council, and the Comptroller's Office, and the Human Rights ombudsman's office;

Whereas free, fair, transparent, and inclusive electoral processes, in conjunction with strong adherence to the constitution and democratic institutions, are the bulwark against anti-democratic forces;

Whereas presidential and legislative elections in Nicaragua are scheduled to be held in October 2006; and

Whereas the prerequisites for free, fair, transparent, and inclusive elections have not yet been met, including securing a sufficient number of credible national and international observers, completing the distribution of voter identification cards, and ensuring that all qualified and willing candidates are permitted to contest the elections: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That—

(1) Congress—

(A) condemns the continued operation of the Aleman-Ortega Pact as detrimental to democracy in the Republic of Nicaragua, the future of democracy in Nicaragua, and the stability of the entire region;

(B) denounces the previous attempts by the National Assembly to encroach unconstitutionally upon the powers of the executive branch, undermine the governability of the country, and advance the personal ambitions of some of its current and former members;

(C) applauds the diplomatic efforts of the Organization of American States (OAS) and