

108TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. RES. 652

Urging the Government of the Republic of Belarus to ensure a democratic, transparent, and fair election process for its parliamentary elections in the fall of 2004.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 20, 2004

Mr. BEREUTER (for himself and Mr. WEXLER) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on International Relations

RESOLUTION

Urging the Government of the Republic of Belarus to ensure a democratic, transparent, and fair election process for its parliamentary elections in the fall of 2004.

Whereas the establishment of a democratic, transparent, and fair election process for the 2004 parliamentary elections in the Republic of Belarus and of a genuinely democratic political system are prerequisites for that country's integration into the Western community of nations;

Whereas the Government of Belarus has accepted numerous specific commitments governing the conduct of elections as a participating State of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), including provisions of the Copenhagen Document;

Whereas the election in the fall of 2004 of Belarus's next parliament will provide an unambiguous test of the extent of the Belarusian authorities' commitment to implement these standards and build a democratic society based on free elections and the rule of law;

Whereas previous parliamentary elections in Belarus have not fully met international standards;

Whereas it is the duty of government and public authorities at all levels to act in a manner consistent with all laws and regulations governing election procedures and to ensure free and fair elections throughout the entire country, including preventing activities aimed at undermining the free exercise of political rights;

Whereas a genuinely free and fair election requires a period of political campaigning conducted in an environment in which neither administrative action nor violence, intimidation, or detention hinder the parties, political associations, and the candidates from presenting their views and qualifications to the citizenry, including organizing supporters, conducting public meetings and events throughout the country, and enjoying unimpeded access to television, radio, print, and Internet media on a non-discriminatory basis;

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

Whereas a genuinely free and fair election requires the full transparency of laws and regulations governing elections,

multiparty representation on election commissions, and unobstructed access by candidates, political parties, and domestic and international observers to all election procedures, including voting and vote-counting in all areas of the country;

Whereas control and manipulation of the media by national and local officials and others acting at their behest could raise grave concerns regarding the commitment of the Belarusian authorities to free and fair elections;

Whereas efforts by national and local officials and others acting at their behest to impose obstacles to free assembly, free speech, and a free and fair political campaign could call into question the fairness of the upcoming elections; and

Whereas the arrest or intimidation of opposition political parties and candidates such as the leader of the United Civic Party and others involved with the opposition including those associated with the Coalition Five Plus represents a deliberate assault on the democratic process: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) looks forward to the development of cordial
3 relations between the United States and the Repub-
4 lic of Belarus;

5 (2) emphasizes that a precondition for the inte-
6 gration of Belarus into the Western community of
7 nations is its establishment of a genuinely demo-
8 cratic political system;

1 (3) expresses its strong and continuing support
2 for the efforts of the Belarusian people to establish
3 a full democracy, the rule of law, and respect for
4 human rights in Belarus;

5 (4) urges the Government of Belarus to guar-
6 antee freedom of association and assembly, including
7 the right of candidates, members of political parties,
8 and others to freely assemble, to organize and con-
9 duct public events, and to exercise these and other
10 rights free from intimidation or harassment by local
11 or national officials or others acting at their behest;

12 (5) urges the Government of Belarus to meet
13 its Organization for Security and Cooperation in Eu-
14 rope (OSCE) commitments on democratic elections;

15 (6) urges the Belarusian authorities to en-
16 sure—

17 (A) the full transparency of election proce-
18 dures before, during, and after the 2004 par-
19 liamentary elections;

20 (B) free access for Belarusian and inter-
21 national election observers;

22 (C) multiparty representation on all elec-
23 tion commissions;

1 (D) unimpeded access by all parties and
2 candidates to print, radio, television, and Inter-
3 net media on a non-discriminatory basis;

4 (E) freedom of candidates, members of op-
5 position parties, and independent media organi-
6 zations from intimidation or harassment by
7 government officials at all levels via selective
8 tax audits and other regulatory procedures, and
9 in the case of media, license revocations and
10 libel suits, among other measures;

11 (F) a transparent process for complaint
12 and appeals through electoral commissions and
13 within the court system that provides timely
14 and effective remedies; and

15 (G) vigorous prosecution of any individual
16 or organization responsible for violations of
17 election laws or regulations, including the appli-
18 cation of appropriate administrative or criminal
19 penalties;

20 (7) further calls upon the Government of
21 Belarus to guarantee election monitors from the Of-
22 fice of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
23 (ODIHR), other participating States of the OSCE,
24 Belarusian political parties, candidates' representa-
25 tives, nongovernmental organizations, and other pri-

1 vate institutions and organizations, both foreign and
2 domestic, unobstructed access to all aspects of the
3 election process, including unimpeded access to pub-
4 lic campaign events, candidates, news media, voting,
5 and post-election tabulation of results and proc-
6 essing of election challenges and complaints;

7 (8) encourages the international community, in-
8 cluding the Council of Europe, the OSCE, and the
9 OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, to continue their ef-
10 forts to support democracy in Belarus and urges
11 countries such as Lithuania and other Baltic coun-
12 tries and Nordic countries to continue to provide as-
13 sistance to nongovernmental organizations and other
14 Belarusian organizations involved in promoting de-
15 mocracy and fair elections in Belarus; and

16 (9) pledges its support to the Belarusian peo-
17 ple, their commitment to a fully free and open demo-
18 cratic system, their creation of a prosperous free
19 market economy, and their country's assumption of
20 its rightful place as a full and equal member of the
21 Western community of democracies.

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