

**EXPRESSING SUPPORT TO THE ORGANIZERS AND
PARTICIPANTS OF THE HISTORIC MEETING
OF THE ASSEMBLY TO PROMOTE THE CIVIL
SOCIETY IN CUBA ON MAY 20, 2005,
IN HAVANA**

MARKUP

BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ONE HUNDRED NINTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

ON

H. Res. 193

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AND PARTICIPANTS OF THE HISTORIC
MEETING OF THE ASSEMBLY TO PROMOTE
THE CIVIL SOCIETY IN CUBA ON
MAY 20, 2005, IN HAVANA**

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 20, 2005

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE,
COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 1:50 p.m. in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Dan Burton (Chairman of the Subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. BURTON. The meeting will come to order. Pursuant to notice, I call up the resolution, H. Res. 193, for purposes of markup and move its recommendation to the Full Committee.

[The resolution referred to follows:]

HRES 193 IH

I. 109th CONGRESS

1st Session

H. RES. 193

Expressing support to the organizers and participants of the historic meeting of the Assembly to Promote the Civil Society in Cuba on May 20, 2005, in Havana.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

April 6, 2005

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida (for himself, Mr. MENENDEZ, Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN, Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida, Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, Mr. BURTON of Indiana, Mr. ENGEL, Mr. CHABOT, Mr. WILSON of South Carolina, Ms. HARRIS, Mr. WEXLER, Mr. MACK, Mr. MURPHY, Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky, Mrs. DRAKE, Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. BAKER, Mr. FOLEY, Mr. FEENEY, Mr. CRENSHAW, Mr. WELLER, Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina, Mr. MCHENRY, Mr. PEARCE, Mr. FLAKE, Mr. CANNON, Mr. SOUDER, Mr. MCCOTTER, Ms. NORTON, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, Mr. PALLONE, Mr. KENNEDY of Minnesota, and Mr. WELDON of Florida) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on International Relations

RESOLUTION

Expressing support to the organizers and participants of the historic meeting of the Assembly to Promote the Civil Society in Cuba on May 20, 2005, in Havana.

Whereas Fidel Castro's terrorist regime has continued to repress all attempts by the Cuban people to bring democratic change to Cuba and denies universally recognized liberties, including freedom of speech, association, movement, and the press;

Whereas thousands of political prisoners are currently imprisoned by Fidel Castro's totalitarian regime;

Whereas in March 2003 Fidel Castro carried out a massive, island wide crackdown on members of Cuba's pro-democracy movement, under which pro-democracy activists were arrested, subjected to 'summary trials', and sentenced to up to 28 years in prison for their pro-democracy activities;

Whereas the Department of State's 2004 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, in referring to Castro's Cuba, states: 'Members of the security forces and prison officials continued to beat and abuse detainees and prisoners, including human rights activists. . . . Prison conditions remained harsh and life threatening, and the Government restricted medical care to some prisoners as a method of control. Prisoners died in jail due to lack of medical care.';

Whereas on May 20, 1902, the Republic of Cuba obtained its independence;

Whereas in the spirit of Jose Marti, many of the future leaders of a free Cuba have called for a meeting of the Assembly of the Civil Society in Cuba, an organization that consists of over 360 opposition and civil society organizations in Cuba;

Whereas on May 20, 2005, the Assembly to Promote the Civil Society in Cuba seeks to convene an historic meeting in Havana on the 103rd anniversary of Cuban Independence;

Whereas the Assembly to Promote the Civil Society in Cuba will focus on bringing democracy and liberty to the enslaved island of Cuba;

Whereas the Assembly to Promote the Civil Society in Cuba is led by three courageous pro-democracy opponents of the Castro regime--Martha Beatriz Roque Cabello, Felix Bonne Carcasses, and Rene Gomez Manzano;

Whereas organizers and participants are convening a meeting of the Assembly to Promote the Civil Society in Cuba at great risk to themselves and their families; and

Whereas President George W. Bush stated in his second inaugural address on January 20, 2005: 'All who live in tyranny and hopelessness can know: the United States will not ignore your oppression, or excuse your oppressors. When you stand for your liberty, we will stand with you. Democratic reformers facing repression, prison, or exile can know: America sees you for who you are--the future leaders of your free country.'; Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives--

- (1) extends its support and solidarity to the organizers and participants of the historic meeting of the Assembly to Promote the Civil Society in Cuba on May 20, 2005, in Havana;
- (2) urges the international community to support the Assembly's mission to bring democracy to Cuba;
- (3) urges the Administration and international community to actively oppose any attempts by the Castro regime to repress or punish the organizers and participants of the Assembly; and
- (4) shares the pro-democracy ideals of the Assembly to Promote the Civil Society in Cuba and believes that this Assembly and others will hasten the day of freedom and democracy for the people of Cuba.

END

Mr. BURTON. Without objection, so ordered. The resolution will be considered as read and open for amendment at any point.

I am pleased to be an original co-sponsor of House Resolution 193, which sends another strong message to the Cuban Government that the United States will not forget those people who are languishing in Cuban prisons for the so-called crime of speaking out against the injustices perpetrated by the Castro regime.

I have always been deeply concerned about the egregious human rights violations in Cuba, and I believe now more than ever, as United States and coalition forces fight to bring freedom and democracy to parts of the world that have long suffered under tyranny, it is critically important to keep our pressure on the Castro regime.

We owe it to the thousands of Cubans languishing in jails to further open the eyes of the world community to the true evils of the Castro regime. Brave Cuban dissidents continue to come forward with their stories and their condemnation of the Castro regime and its failed policies.

In fact, the upcoming general meeting of the Cuban Assembly to Promote Civil Society will be held in Havana on May 20, right under Castro's nose. I cannot think of a more tangible display of both their courage and their determination to carry on the struggle to establish a democratic system and a civil society in Cuba than the assembly members are doing by meeting in Havana.

The United States and all freedom loving people around the world should stand in strong solidarity with these men and women, and we should put the Castro regime on notice that any attempts by the regime to repress or punish the organizers and participants of the assembly will not be tolerated by the rest of the world.

By passing this resolution today, we will once again remind the Castro regime that their efforts to snuff out the Cuban people's pursuit of freedom will never win. I urge my colleagues to join me today in marking up this important resolution and reporting it favorably out of the Subcommittee.

With that I yield to my colleague, Mr. Menendez.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank you for holding this markup on this important and timely resolution, and I am proud to join a bipartisan group of original co-sponsors of the resolution which supports the development of democracy in civil society inside of Cuba.

As you know and have stated, on May 20, opposition leaders are organizing a historic assembly on the 103rd anniversary of Cuban independence. As we learned in a hearing earlier this year, the organizers and the participants in this event are risking their personal freedom for the freedom of the Cuban people.

This resolution makes it clear that we oppose any attempt by the Castro regime to repress or punish the organizers and participants of the assembly as Castro has done with so many others who have spoken out against repression.

Castro's crackdown 2 years ago horrified the world as he arrested 75 dissidents, subjected them to summary trials and sentenced them to long jail terms. Those arrests only added to the hundreds of political dissidents in Castro's jail cells.

Clearly the Castro regime has no respect for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states in Article 4 that, "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment."

The world has recognized these injustices. The State Department calls this wave the most despicable act of political repression in the Americas in a decade. Castro's human rights record has been condemned by Amnesty International, Freedom House and other human rights groups. Freedom House included Cuba in its report entitled "The Worst of the Worst: The World's Most Repressive Societies of 2004."

Our support for this resolution sends a strong message to the Cuban people and to all oppressed people around the world. Now is the time for us to stand together for freedom, for the right for free speech, free association, free elections and for human rights. It is time to stand together against brutality, torture and dictatorship. It is time to stand together with the Cuban people.

Finally, to my brothers and sisters who suffer in Castro's jails under this regime, to their families and friends here in the United States, and in Cuba and to the Cuban people, I say that Castro's days are numbered.

Over 100 years ago the Cuban people won the battle against brutality and oppression and fought for their freedom. I have no doubt that we will win again. I look forward to that day, which is coming soon, when on May 20, our Independence Day, we will all celebrate a free and democratic Cuba.

I urge my colleagues, Mr. Chairman, to vote yes on the resolution.

Mr. BURTON. Thank you, Mr. Menendez.

Mr. Delahunt, do you have any comments?

Mr. DELAHUNT. I do, and I will be very brief. You know my position, obviously, Mr. Chairman, is that our policy in Cuba should be changed at a variety of different levels, but I do support this resolution.

At the same time, I just want to make an observation that three individuals are singled out. I think it is important to remember that in Cuba there are individuals with different perspectives on American policy toward Cuba.

I would submit that the majority of those who are currently serving in Cuban prisons support a change in the American policy. They are not mentioned in this particular resolution, but I am sure the resolution was drafted with the spirit, if you will, that we admire and respect all who stand up for individual liberties as we understand them and support all of them.

With that, I yield back.

Mr. BURTON. Thank you, Mr. Delahunt.

Ms. Lee?

Ms. LEE. Yes, of course. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let me just say I do not intend to vote for this resolution. While I believe that we all should adhere to international standards of human rights, including the United States, that we need to determine ways that we can, starting here at home, ensure the equal treatment of prisoners and those who have committed crimes in terms of access to the criminal justice system.

Also, you know, I think we have seen the human rights violations in Guantanamo and in Iraq, and I think we need to look at how we approach this from an international perspective, including looking at some of our own issues here, and so I just respectfully wanted, for the record, to let you know that I do not intend to vote for this if you call for a rollcall.

Thank you.

Mr. BURTON. Thank you, Ms. Lee.

Mr. McCaul, do you have any comments you would like to make on the bill?

[No response.]

Mr. BURTON. Are there any amendments to the legislation?

[No response.]

Mr. BURTON. If not, the question occurs on the motion to report the resolution, H. Res. 193, favorably.

All those in favor will signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Mr. BURTON. All opposed will signify by saying no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Mr. BURTON. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it. The ayes have it, and the resolution is reported favorably.

The staff is directed to make any technical and conforming amendments that are necessary, and with that we will move on to the next order of business.

[Whereupon, at 1:58 p.m. the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

