

Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the “Belarus Democracy Act” reauthorization. This title of this bill would have amused George Orwell, as it is in fact a US regime-change bill. Where does the United States Congress derive the moral or legal authority to determine which political parties or organizations in Belarus -- or anywhere else -- are to be US-funded and which are to be destabilized? How can anyone argue that US support for regime-change in Belarus is somehow “promoting democracy”? We pick the parties who are to be supported and funded and somehow this is supposed to reflect the will of the Belarusian people? How would Americans feel if the tables were turned and a powerful foreign country demanded that only a political party it selected and funded could legitimately reflect the will of the American people?

I would like to know how many millions of taxpayer dollars the US government has wasted trying to overthrow the government in Belarus. I would like to know how much money has been squandered by US government-funded front organizations like the National Endowment for Democracy, the International Republican Institute, Freedom House, and others meddling like the old Soviet Union in the internal politics of a country that has neither threatened nor attacked the United States. It the arrogance of our foreign policy establishment that leads to this kind of schizophrenic legislation, where we demand that the rest of the world bend to the will of US foreign policy and we call it “democracy.” We wonder why we are no longer loved and admired overseas.

Finally, I strongly object to the sanctions that this legislation imposes on Belarus. We must keep in mind that sanctions and blockades of foreign countries are considered acts of war. Do we need to continue war-like actions against yet another country? Can we afford it?

I wish to emphasize that I take this position not because I am in support of the regime in Belarus, or anywhere else. I take this position because it is dangerous folly to be the nation that

arrogates to itself the right to determine the leadership of the rest of the world. As we teeter closer to bankruptcy, it should be more obvious that we need to change our foreign policy to one of constructive engagement rather than hostile interventionism. And though it scarcely should need to be said, I must remind my colleagues today that we are the U.S. House of Representatives, and not some sort of world congress. We have no constitutional authority to intervene in the wholly domestic affairs of Belarus or any other sovereign nation.