

Congressman Ron Paul Wednesday, March 20, 2002

Statement against Meddling in Domestic Ukrainian Politics

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, I strongly oppose H. Res. 339, a bill by the United States Congress which seeks to tell a sovereign nation how to hold its own elections. It seems the height of arrogance for us to sit here and lecture the people and government of Ukraine on what they should do and should not do in their own election process. One would have thought after our own election debacle in November 2000, that we would have learned how counterproductive and hypocritical it is to lecture other democratic countries on their electoral processes. How would members of this body- or any American- react if countries like Ukraine demanded that our elections here in the United States conform to their criteria? So I think we can guess how Ukrainians feel about this piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, Ukraine has been the recipient of hundreds of millions of dollars in foreign aid from the United States. In fiscal year 2002 alone, Ukraine was provided \$154 million. Yet after all this money- which we were told was to promote democracy- and more than ten years after the end of the Soviet Union, we are told in this legislation that Ukraine has made little if any progress in establishing a democratic political system.

Far from getting more involved in Ukraine's electoral process, which is where this legislation leads us, the United States is already much too involved in the Ukrainian elections. The U.S. government has sent some \$4.7 million dollars to Ukraine for monitoring and assistance programs, including to train their electoral commission members and domestic monitoring organizations. There have been numerous reports of U.S.-funded non-governmental organizations in Ukraine being involved in pushing one or another political party. This makes it look like the United States is taking sides in the Ukrainian elections.

The legislation calls for the full access of Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) monitors to all aspects of the parliamentary elections, but that organization has time and time again, from Slovakia to Russia and elsewhere, shown itself to be unreliable and politically biased. Yet the United States continues to fund and participate in OSCE activities. As British writer John Laughland observed this week in the Guardian newspaper, "Western election monitoring has become the political equivalent of an Arthur Andersen audit. This supposedly

technical process is now so corrupted by political bias that it would be better to abandon it. Only then will countries be able to elect their leaders freely." Mr. Speaker, I think this is advice we would be wise to heed.

Other aspects of this bill are likewise troubling. This bill seeks, from thousands of miles away and without any of the facts, to demand that the Ukrainian government solve crimes within Ukraine that have absolutely nothing to do with the United States. No one knows what happened to journalist Heorhiy Gongadze or any of the alleged murdered Ukrainian journalists, yet by adding it into this ill-advised piece of legislation we are sitting here suggesting that the government has something to do with the alleged murders. This meddling into the Ukrainian judicial system is inappropriate and counter-productive.

Mr. Speaker, we are legislators in the United States Congress. We are not in Ukraine. We have no right to interfere in the internal affairs of that country and no business telling them how to conduct their elections. A far better policy toward Ukraine would be to eliminate any U.S.-government imposed barrier to free trade between Americans and Ukrainians.