

Belarus Democracy Act

Prime Sponsor: Christopher H. Smith (NJ-04)

Public Law 108-347
Signed by the President
October 20, 2004

Introduced by Mr. Smith as
HR 854, February 13, 2003

Public Law 108–347
108th Congress

An Act

To provide for the promotion of democracy, human rights, and rule of law in the Republic of Belarus and for the consolidation and strengthening of Belarus sovereignty and independence.

Oct. 20, 2004
[H.R. 854]

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Belarus Democracy Act of 2004”.

Belarus
Democracy Act of
2004.
22 USC 5811
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22 USC 5811
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SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) The United States supports the promotion of democracy, respect for human rights, and the rule of law in the Republic of Belarus consistent with its commitments as a participating state of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

(2) The United States has a vital interest in the independence and sovereignty of the Republic of Belarus and its integration into the European community of democracies.

(3) In November 1996, Lukashenka orchestrated an illegal and unconstitutional referendum that enabled him to impose a new constitution, abolish the duly-elected parliament, the 13th Supreme Soviet, install a largely powerless National Assembly, and extend his term of office to 2001.

(4) Democratic forces in Belarus have organized peaceful demonstrations against the Lukashenka regime in cities and towns throughout Belarus which led to beatings, mass arrests, and extended incarcerations.

(5) Victor Gonchar, Anatoly Krasovsky, and Yuri Zakharenka, who have been leaders and supporters of the democratic forces in Belarus, and Dmitry Zavadsky, a journalist known for his critical reporting in Belarus, have disappeared and are presumed dead.

Victor Gonchar.
Anatoly
Krasovsky.
Yuri
Zakharenka.
Dmitry
Zavadsky.

(6) Former Belarus Government officials have come forward with credible allegations and evidence that top officials of the Lukashenka regime were involved in the disappearances.

(7) The Belarusian authorities have mounted a major systematic crackdown on civil society through the closure, harassment, and repression of nongovernmental organizations, and independent trade unions.

(8) The Belarusian authorities actively suppress freedom of speech and expression, including engaging in systematic reprisals against independent media.

(9) The Lukashenka regime has reversed the revival of Belarusian language and culture, including through the closure of the National Humanities Lyceum, the last remaining high school where classes were taught in the Belarusian language.

(10) The Lukashenka regime harasses the autocephalic Belarusian Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Jewish community, the Hindu Lights of Kalyasa community, evangelical Protestant churches (such as Baptist and Pentecostal groups), and other minority religious groups.

(11) The Law on Religious Freedom and Religious Organizations, passed by the National Assembly and signed by Lukashenka on October 31, 2002, establishes one of the most repressive legal regimes in the OSCE region, severely limiting religious freedom and placing excessively burdensome government controls on religious practice.

(12) The parliamentary elections of October 15, 2000, and the presidential election of September 9, 2001, were determined to be fundamentally unfair and nondemocratic.

(13) The Government of Belarus has made no substantive progress in addressing criteria established by the OSCE in 2000, ending repression and the climate of fear, permitting a functioning independent media, ensuring transparency of the elections process, and strengthening of the functions of parliament.

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note.

**SEC. 3. ASSISTANCE TO PROMOTE DEMOCRACY AND CIVIL SOCIETY
IN BELARUS.**

(a) **PURPOSES OF ASSISTANCE.**—The assistance under this section shall be available for the following purposes:

(1) To assist the people of the Republic of Belarus in regaining their freedom and to enable them to join the European community of democracies.

(2) To encourage free and fair presidential, parliamentary, and local elections in Belarus, conducted in a manner consistent with internationally accepted standards and under the supervision of internationally recognized observers.

(3) To assist in restoring and strengthening institutions of democratic governance in Belarus.

President.

(b) **AUTHORIZATION FOR ASSISTANCE.**—To carry out the purposes of subsection (a), the President is authorized to furnish assistance and other support for the activities described in subsection (c), to be provided primarily for indigenous Belarusian groups that are committed to the support of democratic processes.

(c) **ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED.**—Activities that may be supported by assistance under subsection (b) include—

(1) the observation of elections and the promotion of free and fair electoral processes;

(2) development of democratic political parties;

(3) radio and television broadcasting to and within Belarus;

(4) the development of nongovernmental organizations promoting democracy and supporting human rights;

(5) the development of independent media working within Belarus and from locations outside the country and supported by nonstate-controlled printing facilities;

(6) international exchanges and advanced professional training programs for leaders and members of the democratic

forces in skill areas central to the development of civil society; and

(7) other activities consistent with the purposes of this Act.

(d) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.— There are authorized to be appropriated to the President to carry out this section such sums as may be necessary for each of the fiscal years 2005 and 2006.

(2) AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS.—Amounts appropriated pursuant to the authorization of appropriations under paragraph (1) are authorized to remain available until expended.

SEC. 4. RADIO BROADCASTING TO BELARUS.

22 USC 5811
note.

(a) PURPOSE.—It is the purpose of this section to authorize increased support for United States Government and surrogate radio broadcasting to the Republic of Belarus that will facilitate the unhindered dissemination of information.

(b) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—In addition to such sums as are otherwise authorized to be appropriated, there are authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be necessary for fiscal year 2005 and each subsequent fiscal year for radio broadcasting to the people of Belarus in languages spoken in Belarus.

SEC. 5. SENSE OF CONGRESS RELATING TO SANCTIONS AGAINST BELARUS.

22 USC 5811
note.

(a) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that the sanctions described in subsection (c) should apply with respect to the Republic of Belarus until the President determines and certifies to the appropriate congressional committees that the Government of Belarus has made significant progress in meeting the conditions described in subsection (b).

(b) CONDITIONS.—The conditions referred to in subsection (a) are the following:

(1) The release of individuals in Belarus who have been jailed based on political or religious beliefs.

(2) The withdrawal of politically motivated legal charges against all opposition figures and independent journalists in Belarus.

(3) A full accounting of the disappearances of opposition leaders and journalists in Belarus, including Victor Gonchar, Anatoly Krasovsky, Yuri Zakharenka, and Dmitry Zavadsky, and the prosecution of those individuals who are responsible for their disappearances.

(4) The cessation of all forms of harassment and repression against the independent media, independent trade unions, non-governmental organizations, religious organizations (including their leadership and members), and the political opposition in Belarus.

(5) The implementation of free and fair presidential and parliamentary elections in Belarus consistent with OSCE commitments.

(c) PROHIBITION ON LOANS AND INVESTMENT.—

(1) UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT FINANCING.—No loan, credit guarantee, insurance, financing, or other similar financial assistance should be extended by any agency of the United States Government (including the Export-Import Bank and the Overseas Private Investment Corporation) to the Government

of Belarus, except with respect to the provision of humanitarian goods and agricultural or medical products.

(2) TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY.—No funds available to the Trade and Development Agency should be available for activities of the Agency in or for Belarus.

(d) MULTILATERAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE.—It is further the sense of Congress that, in addition to the application of the sanctions described in subsection (c) to the Republic of Belarus (until the President determines and certifies to the appropriate congressional committees that the Government of Belarus has made significant progress in meeting the conditions described in subsection (b)), the Secretary of the Treasury should instruct the United States Executive Director of each international financial institution to which the United States is a member to use the voice and vote of the United States to oppose any extension by those institutions of any financial assistance (including any technical assistance or grant) of any kind to the Government of Belarus, except for loans and assistance that serve humanitarian needs.

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SEC. 6. MULTILATERAL COOPERATION.

It is the sense of Congress that the President should continue to seek to coordinate with other countries, particularly European countries, a comprehensive, multilateral strategy to further the purposes of this Act, including, as appropriate, encouraging other countries to take measures with respect to the Republic of Belarus that are similar to measures described in this Act.

22 USC 5811
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SEC. 7. REPORT.

(a) REPORT.— Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, and not later than 1 year thereafter, the President shall transmit to the appropriate congressional committees a report that describes, with respect to the preceding 12-month period, and to the extent practicable the following:

(1) The sale or delivery of weapons or weapons-related technologies from the Republic of Belarus to any country, the government of which the Secretary of State has determined, for purposes of section 6(j)(1) of the Export Administration Act of 1979 (50 U.S.C. App. 2405(j)(1)), has repeatedly provided support for acts of international terrorism.

(2) An identification of each country described in paragraph (1) and a detailed description of the weapons or weapons-related technologies involved in the sale.

(3) An identification of the goods, services, credits, or other consideration received by Belarus in exchange for the weapons or weapons-related technologies.

(4) The personal assets and wealth of Aleksandr Lukashenka and other senior leadership of the Government of Belarus.

(b) FORM.—A report transmitted pursuant to subsection (a) shall be in unclassified form but may contain a classified annex.

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SEC. 8. DECLARATION OF POLICY.

Congress hereby—

(1) calls upon the Lukashenka regime to cease its persecution of political opponents or independent journalists and to release those individuals who have been imprisoned for opposing his regime or for exercising their right to freedom of speech;

(2) expresses its grave concern about the disappearance of Victor Gonchar, Anatoly Krasovsky, Yuri Zakharenko, and Dmitry Zavadsky and calls upon the Lukashenka regime to cooperate fully with the Belrussian civil initiative “We Remember” and to extend to this organization all necessary information to find out the truth about the disappearances;

(3) calls upon the Lukashenka regime to cooperate fully with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and its specially appointed representatives in matters regarding the resolution of the cases of the disappeared; and

(4) commends the democratic opposition in Belarus for their commitment to participate in October 2004 Parliamentary elections as a unified coalition and for their courage in the face of the repression of the Lukashenka regime in Belarus.

SEC. 9. DEFINITIONS.

22 USC 5811
note.

In this Act:

(1) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.—The term “appropriate congressional committees” means the Committee on International Relations of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate.

(2) OSCE.—The term “OSCE” means the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

(3) SENIOR LEADERSHIP OF THE GOVERNMENT OF BELARUS.—The term “senior leadership of the Government of Belarus” includes—

(A) the President, Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Ministers, government ministers, Chairmen of State Committees, and members of the Presidential Administration of Belarus;

(B) any official of the Government of Belarus who is personally and substantially involved in the suppression of freedom in Belarus, including judges and prosecutors; and

(C) any other individual determined by the Secretary of State (or the Secretary’s designee) to be personally and substantially involved in the formulation or execution of the policies of the Lukashenka regime that are in contradiction of internationally recognized human rights standards.

Approved October 20, 2004.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY—H.R. 854:

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, Vol. 150 (2004):

Oct. 4, considered and passed House.

Oct. 6, considered and passed Senate.

WEEKLY COMPILATION OF PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS, Vol. 40 (2004):

Oct. 20, Presidential statement.

