

they did just recently is the appropriate time to mark and to reaffirm this very special relationship. Israel is one of the world's most vibrant democracies.

Some may wonder why we choose to honor this small country for holding an election. After all, Israel has held 17 elections in its 55-year history, five in the past decade alone. Yet another Israeli trip to the polls seems hardly remarkable. But, Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what earns Israeli democracy its special place in our friendship and respect and its special status among the world's democracies. We take its democratic nature for granted. Yet Israeli democracy endures under extraordinary circumstances, of difficulties, tragedies, and suicide bombings found nowhere else on the face of this planet.

The object of hatred from most of the regimes in its region, not one of which is a democracy, Israel would have every excuse in the world to lapse into the lamentable political mores of its region. But it refuses to do so. Instead, it brings democratic light to a region dominated by dictators.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the people of Israel who have again shown their unswerving devotion to democracy with little sense that they are doing something extraordinary.

Let me also take this opportunity to congratulate Prime Minister Sharon on his impressive plurality and wish him good luck in forming a new government. In passing this resolution, we assure the new Israeli Government that it can look forward to the closest possible relationship with the American people and with the Congress of the United States.

I urge all my colleagues to support this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CANTOR), the author of this resolution, who is our new chief deputy whip and a person with whom I had the pleasure of going to Israel with last year.

I look forward to my next visit to Israel just this Friday. I wish that he would be going with us.

Mr. CANTOR. Mr. Speaker, I rise to support H. Res. 61, and I thank the gentlewoman from Florida and the gentleman from California for their work in bringing this resolution to the floor.

On January 28, citizens in Israel exercised their right to vote in a free, transparent and democratic election. In Israel, like the United States, the right of citizens to vote is not denied or abridged on account of race, color, creed, sex or religion. Unfortunately, commitment to democracy and equal rights is a rarity in the Middle East. Israel's neighbors, like Syria, Iran, Iraq and others, do not share our respect for freedom. Behaviors that we consider basic rights, like free speech, fair trials, freedom of the press and

freedom of religion are nonexistent. The concepts of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are often demonized in some countries as sinful products of the Great Satan culture of the West.

That is, Mr. Speaker, why I stand here today and congratulate our only democratic ally in the Middle East, Israel, a country that stands with the United States on the key principles of human rights, freedom, peace and democracy, a country like no other in its region.

Mr. Speaker, like the United States, Israel is currently fighting a war on terrorism against people dedicated to hate and destruction, people dedicated to ending freedom and democracy, and dedicated to suppressing the basic rights of life and liberty.

□ 1530

It is incomprehensible, but these armies of evil believe that they can destroy, maim, and kill innocent people in the name of God. For the past 22½ years, Israel has faced an unrelenting campaign of violence and terror against her citizens, a war that began just months after the region stood at the doorstep of peace waiting to enter and then the door was abruptly shut. Throughout all of this unrest, it is amazing that on January 28 just a few weeks ago, the Israeli people engaged in the most basic and important feature of democracy. They held free, open, and competitive elections, an act in stark contrast to their dictatorial enemies.

Mr. Speaker, we in the United States consider Israel a real friend, a true ally. We must maintain our commitment to Israel's security. We must stand steadfast with President Bush and hold the Palestinian Authority to the strict guidelines laid out during the President's June 24 Rose Garden speech. We know from past experience that imposing an artificial deadline will not result in peace in the Middle East. Peace will only come with security, not in spite of it. Israel has always made a sincere commitment to peace in the region. Many times her commitment to peace has come at the expense of innocent life. We need to make sure we stand with and support our only democratic ally in the region.

I join my colleagues today in congratulating Israel on free and democratic elections, and I welcome a continued dialogue on how to best stop the violence and bring about peace and stability in this vitally important region.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I yield as much time as he may consume to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BELL), one of our new colleagues who has already demonstrated qualities of great leadership in this body.

Mr. BELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge my colleagues to join me in commending the Nation of Israel and to support passage of this very important resolution. A great philosopher once wrote that "freedom cannot be

bought for nothing. If you hold her precious, you must hold all else of little worth."

Those words were written thousands of years ago, but I cannot think of any contemporary statement that provides such a clear window into the times in which we now live, into the struggle in which we are now locked.

As we have once again learned here in America this past year, the struggle for freedom is a constant one. It is a battle never completely won but one that must be perpetually fought. The battle for freedom is one that exacts an enormous price, and few people on this Earth have paid as heavy a price for their freedom as the people of Israel.

And as we see on our evening news on too many nights, the sons and daughters of Israel continue to pay that price just as they have for thousands of years. I think it is only fitting that in the wake of their 17th consecutive election as a free nation that the United States Congress would honor the Nation of Israel. We should honor them for their unwaivering commitment to find and hold freedom, and we should honor them for the sacrifice millions of Jewish people have made in pursuit of their dream, in pursuit of their right to hold free elections as a free people.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my friend from Texas for his eloquent and powerful statement, and I urge all of my colleagues to support this resolution.

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my grave concerns with the content of the resolution congratulating Israel on their recent elections.

What could—and should—have been a nice innocuous resolution congratulating a key ally for running their recent election more fairly than we can, was instead hijacked by anti-Palestinian groups in Congress and turned into another diatribe against the Palestinians.

Rather than simply congratulating Israel, the resolution includes language accusing Palestinian leaders of supporting terrorism in Israel and the occupied territories. It further suggest that leaders of the Palestinian Authority, chosen by the Palestinian people, should be thrown out of office. If our role as a nation is to play peace broker in the Middle East, we must stop choosing sides in this ongoing conflict in which neither side is fully in the right.

I do commend Israel for conducting a free and fair election and I wish I could say the same for our most recent Presidential election. But, the commendation should have ended there.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, I reluctantly must oppose this resolution.

Though I am sure this resolution commending Israel for holding free elections was introduced with the best intentions, this legislation unfortunately goes further than a simple commendation. The legislation as written will only once again inject the United States into the decades-old and intractable conflict in the Middle East. By commending Israel while at the same time demanding that the Palestinians take specific actions, this legislation places the United States squarely in the middle of a conflict that has absolutely nothing to do with American interests. Also, the resolution states that the United States is committed

to secure peace for Israel. We cannot afford nor are we constitutionally permitted to play referee in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and securing peace for any country but the United States is not the role of this body.

We must resist the temptation to meddle in the affairs of far-away nations no matter how good our intentions may be. If we are to keep our Constitutional republic we must uphold the wise counsel of those who crafted our founding set of laws.

Thomas Jefferson summed up the foreign policy position we must uphold in his 1801 inaugural address: "People, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations—entangling alliances with none." How many champion Jefferson and the Constitution, but conveniently ignore both when it comes to American foreign policy? Washington similarly urged that the U.S. must "Act for ourselves and not for others," by forming an "American character wholly free of foreign attachments." Do so many on Capitol Hill now believe Washington was wrong?

Mr. Speaker, how many more times must we place ourselves and our country at risk by taking one side or other in battles, wars, and conflicts that have nothing to do with the United States, and where anger toward the United States will inevitably result? I urge my colleagues to uphold the Constitution and vote against this unfortunately-worded resolution.

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, today we are debating a resolution congratulating Israel for conducting free and fair elections. I, too, rise to offer my congratulations to the people of Israel for their recent free and open elections.

That being said, I have concerns with the wording of the resolution. I find it curious that a resolution of congratulations to the Israeli people also contains condemnations of the actions—or inactions—of the Palestinian people.

Mr. Speaker, the resolution refers to President Bush's statement of June 24, 2002. But what is the vision of this Administration? Secretary Colin Powell said it is to build, "a region where Israelis and Arabs can live together in peace, security, and dignity." The resolution before us mentions peace and security for Israel, but it says nothing of peace and security for the Palestinian people in the Occupied Territories. Where is the balance?

Unfortunately, we again have a resolution before the House that is perceived to be one-sided in nature, and which does not present the United States as an honest broker to both sides in this conflict.

I will support this resolution, but I wish to make it know that the Congress of the United States should strive to support the goal of peace in the region for all peoples. The United States must act as an even-handed honest broker to all parties in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict if there is ever to be peace in the region.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. OTTER). The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 61.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of

those present have voted in the affirmative.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

EXTENDING CERTAIN HYDRO-ELECTRIC LICENSES IN THE STATE OF ALASKA

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 337) to extend certain hydro-electric licenses in the State of Alaska.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 337

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

SECTION 1. STAY AND REINSTATEMENT OF FERC LICENSE NO. 11393.

(a) Upon the request of the licensee for FERC Project No. 11393, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission shall issue an order staying the license.

(b) Upon the request of the licensee for FERC Project No. 11393, but not later than 6 years after the date that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission receives written notice that construction of the Swan-Tyee transmission line is completed, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission shall issue an order lifting the stay and make the effective date of the license the date on which the stay is lifted.

(c) Upon request of the licensee for FERC Project No. 11393 and notwithstanding the time period specified in section 13 of the Federal Power Act for the commencement of construction, the Commission shall, after reasonable notice and in accordance with the good faith, due diligence, and public interest requirements of that section, extend the time period during which licensee is required to commence the construction of the project for not more than one 2-year time period.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 337 and to insert extraneous material on the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Illinois?

There was no objection.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 337, which was introduced by the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. YOUNG). The bill before us today directs the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, known as FERC, upon request of a license to issue a stay of a license for a hydroelectric project in Alaska pending the construction of an

associated transmission line. In addition, the bill also directs FERC to extend the construction deadline for this project for not more than a 2-year time period once the stay is lifted.

This bill is identical to Senate bill S. 1843 as passed by the House during the final days of the 107th Congress and unfortunately was prevented from being signed into law due to a clerical error. Today we rectify that incident and once again let the will of the House be known concerning the license for the construction of a 96-megawatt hydroelectric power project at Mahoney Lake near Ketchikan in southeast Alaska. Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to support this piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, the Federal Power Act authorizes the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to issue licenses for the construction of new hydroelectric power projects. Section 13 of the act establishes time limits for commencement of construction of a hydroelectric project once FERC has issued a license. The licensee must begin construction not more than 2 years from the date the license is issued unless FERC extends the initial deadline.

Section 13 permits FERC to grant only one extension of that deadline for not longer than 2 additional years when not incompatible with the public interest. Accordingly, FERC lacks the authority to extend the deadline beyond a maximum of 2 years from the original deadline for commencement of construction. Therefore, a license is subject to termination if a licensee fails to begin construction within 4 years of the date of issuance. There are many reasons why construction of a project may not begin within the statutory 4-year period, including lack of a power sales contract or, in the case of the bill before us, the absence of a completed transmission line to carry power from the project to areas where it is needed.

The purpose of the bill before us, H.R. 337, is to direct FERC upon the request of the licensee to issue an order staying a license of a hydroelectric project in the State of Alaska, pending the construction of an associated transmission line. Once the line is completed, the bill directs FERC to lift the stay and extend the deadline to commence construction for one additional 2-year period. The legislation also directs FERC to extend the deadline to commence construction of the project for one additional 2-year period.

On January 22, 1998, FERC issued a license to the City of Saxman, Alaska, to construct and operate and maintain the 96-megawatt Mahoney Lake Hydroelectric Project. The project is located on Upper Mahoney Lake and Upper Mahoney Creek near Ketchikan in