



Legislative Bulletin.....May 28, 2014

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**H. R. 4587 – Venezuelan Human Rights and Democracy Protection Act
(Rep. Ros-Lehtinen, R-FL)**

Order of Business: The bill is scheduled to be considered on May 28, 2014, under suspension of the rules, which requires a two-thirds majority for passage.

Summary: [H.R. 4587](#) would impose targeted sanctions on individuals responsible for carrying out or ordering human rights abuses against the citizens of Venezuela. The bill would mandate that the Secretary of State direct the United States Permanent Representative to the Organization of American States (OAS) to defend and protect the Inter-American Democratic Charter, and strengthen the independent Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to advance the protection of human rights throughout the Western Hemisphere, and in Venezuela in particular. H.R. 4587 would direct the President of the United States to impose sanctions on any current or former official of the Government of Venezuela or a person acting on behalf of that Government that has perpetrated acts of violence or serious human rights abuses in Venezuela against individuals participating in protests in Venezuela that began on February 12, 2014. The sanctions would block assets or deny visas to such individuals. The bill would also impose sanctions with respect to the transfer of goods or technologies to Venezuela that are likely to be used to commit human rights abuses. H.R. 4587 mandates that the Secretary of State submit to the House Foreign Affairs Committee and to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations a classified comprehensive strategy to promote internet freedom and access to information in Venezuela. The bill also calls for the assistance and release of political prisoners and other prisoners of conscience imprisoned in the country.

Additional Information: On February 12, 2014, Venezuelan students began protesting in several cities against Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro’s inability to stem violent crime, his undemocratic actions, and a rapidly deteriorating economy marked by high inflation and shortages of consumer goods. On February 12, 2014, a judge issued an arrest warrant for

Leopoldo Lopez, leader of the opposition party Voluntad Popular, for unfounded allegations in connection with the student protests. Following this, the Government of Venezuela notified the United States Department of State that it had declared three consular officers at the United States Embassy in Venezuela personae non gratae. On February 18, 2014, opposition leader Leopoldo Lopez turned himself in to Venezuelan authorities, was arrested, and charged with criminal incitement, conspiracy, arson, intent to damage property, and has since been imprisoned at a military facility.

As of May 1, 2014, there have been 41 people killed, a reported 60 cases of torture, over 100 injured, and many unjustly detained in relation to pro-democracy demonstrations throughout Venezuela. According to the State Department's [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013 for Venezuela](#), the government of Venezuela has repeatedly used the judiciary branch to intimidate and selectively prosecute political, union, business, and civil society leaders who were critical of government policies or actions. According to Freedom House's [Freedom in the World report of 2013](#) on Venezuela, "Nicolas Maduro, [the President of Venezuela] further weakened the independent media, reduced the opposition's ability to serve as a check on government policy, and made threats to civil society groups."

Committee Action: On May 7th, the bill was introduced by Congresswoman Ros-Lehtinen and referred to the House Judiciary Committee and the House Foreign Affairs Committee. The House Foreign Affairs Committee held a mark-up session of the bill on May 9, 2014 and ordered it to be reported as amended by Unanimous Consent.

Administration Position: No Statement of Administration Policy is available.

Cost to Taxpayers: The [Congressional Budget Office](#) (CBO) estimates that implementing H.R. 4587 would cost \$7 million over the 2015-2019 period, assuming appropriation of the specified and estimated amounts. Pay-as-you-go procedures apply to this legislation because it would affect direct spending and revenues; however, CBO estimates that those effects would not be significant.

Does the Bill Expand the Size and Scope of the Federal Government?: No.

Does the Bill Contain Any New State-Government, Local-Government, or Private-Sector Mandates?: H.R. 4587 contains no intergovernmental mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (UMRA) and would impose no costs on state, local, or tribal governments. H.R. 4587 would impose private-sector mandates as defined in UMRA by prohibiting certain transactions with entities associated with human rights violations in Venezuela. In addition, individuals found to be associated with the human rights violations could have their visas revoked. The cost of the mandates would be any forgone income directly related to the prohibited transactions and to the loss of visas. Based on data from the U.S. International Trade Commission, the total value of transactions that could be affected by the legislation is low. Further, CBO expects that the number of individuals in the United States that could have their visa revoked under the bill is small. Therefore, [CBO estimates](#) that the aggregate cost of the mandates would fall below the annual threshold for private-sector mandates established in UMRA (\$152 million in 2014, adjusted annually for inflation).

Constitutional Authority: Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following: Article 1, Section 8 of the Constitution.

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**H. Res. 599 – Urging the Government of the People’s Republic of China to respect the freedom of assembly, expression, religion and all fundamental human rights for all of its citizens and to stop censoring discussion of the 1989 Tiananmen Square demonstrations and their violent suppression
(Rep. Smith, R-NJ)**

Order of Business: The bill is scheduled to be considered on May 28, 2014, under a motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill, which requires a two-thirds majority for passage.

Summary: [H. Res. 599](#) urges the Government of the People’s Republic of China to respect the freedom of assembly, expression, and religion and all fundamental human rights and the rule of law for all its citizens and to stop censoring discussion of the 1989 Tiananmen Square demonstrations and their violent suppression. The resolution calls on the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) to take all appropriate steps to circumvent Chinese internet censorship and to provide information to the people of China about the Tiananmen Square Massacre, and on the United States Government to make human rights, including religious freedom, a priority in bilateral discussions with the Chinese Government. The resolution would also instruct the United States representative at the United Nations Human Rights Council to introduce a resolution calling for an examination of the human rights practices of the Government of the People’s Republic of China. H. Res. 599 calls upon the Chinese Government to end the harassment and imprisonment of Chinese citizens expressing their freedom of religion, expression, and association, including on the Internet. The legislation would also call for the release of all prisoners of conscience incarcerated as a result of their participation in the peaceful pro-democracy demonstrations in 1989.

Additional Information: On June 4, 1989, peaceful and pro-democratic demonstrations held in and around Beijing’s Tiananmen Square were brutally crushed by the People’s Liberation Army, carrying out the orders of China’s Communist Party leadership. Independent observers report that hundreds, perhaps thousands, were killed and wounded by the People’s Liberation Army soldiers and other security forces. Furthermore, 20,000 people throughout China suspected of taking part in the democracy movement were reportedly arrested and sentenced without trial to prison or reeducation through labor, and many were reportedly tortured, with many being imprisoned for decades.

Committee Action: On May 23, 2014, the resolution was introduced by Congressman Smith and was referred to the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Administration Position: No Statement of Administration Policy is available.

Cost to Taxpayers: No Congressional Budget Office cost estimate is available.

Does the Bill Expand the Size and Scope of the Federal Government?: No.

Does the Bill Contain Any New State-Government, Local-Government, or Private-Sector Mandates?: No.

Constitutional Authority: House Rules do not require constitutional authority statements for resolutions.

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**H. R. 4028 – To amend the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 to include the desecration of cemeteries among the many forms of violations of the right to religious freedom.
(Rep. Meng, D-NY)**

Order of Business: The bill is scheduled to be considered on May 28, 2014, under a motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill, which requires a two-thirds majority for passage.

Summary: [H.R. 4028](#) amends the [International Religious Freedom Act of 1998](#) (Public Law 105–292) in Section 2(a)(4) to include the desecration of cemeteries among the many forms of violations of the right to religious freedom.

Additional Information: The bill states that Congress is committed to protecting and preserving the heritage and sacred sites of national, religious, and ethnic groups, which includes cemeteries in the United States and abroad, in light of recent desecrations of cemeteries around the world as a direct result of religious or spiritual affiliation. Recent examples of such desecrations would include the destruction of [Baha’i cemeteries in Iran](#).

Committee Action: On February 10, 2014, the bill was introduced by Congresswoman Meng and was referred to the House Foreign Affairs Committee. On February 27, 2014, H.R. 4028 was referred to the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights and

International Organizations. The House Foreign Affairs Committee held a mark-up session of the bill on April 30, 2014, and ordered it to be reported as amended by Unanimous Consent.

Administration Position: No Statement of Administration Policy is available.

Cost to Taxpayers: The [Congressional Budget Office](#) (CBO) estimates that implementing H.R. 4028 would have no effect on the federal budget.

Does the Bill Expand the Size and Scope of the Federal Government?: No

Does the Bill Contain Any New State-Government, Local-Government, or Private-Sector Mandates?: No.

Constitutional Authority: Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following: Article I, Section 8.

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