

## H. Res. 348, Supporting the right of the people of Ukraine to freely elect their government and determine their future

### FLOOR SITUATION

On Tuesday, October 20, 2015, the House will consider [H. Res. 348](#), a resolution *supporting the right of the people of Ukraine to freely elect their government and determine their future*, under suspension of the rules. H. Res. 348 was introduced on July 7, 2015 by Rep. David Cicilline (D-RI) and was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, which amended and ordered the bill reported by unanimous consent on October 9, 2015.

### SUMMARY

H. Res. 348 resolves that the House of Representatives:

- Strongly supports the right of the people of Ukraine to freely elect their government and determine their future;
- Urges the Administration to expedite assistance to Ukraine to facilitate the political, economic, and social reforms necessary for free and fair elections that meet international standards; and,
- Condemns attempts on the part of any outside forces, including the Government of Russia, its agents or supporters, to interfere in Ukraine's elections, including through interference, intimidation, violence, or coercion.

### BACKGROUND

In November 2013, following Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych's rejection of an economic and political agreement with the European Union in favor of stronger ties with Russia, large-scale protests broke out in the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv. The Ukrainian government attempted to suppress these protests by force, and in February 2014, Yanukovych was forced to compromise with the democratic forces and unexpectedly fled the country for Russia. The new Ukrainian government scheduled presidential and parliamentary elections, which resulted in the election of President Petro Poroshenko and a democratic parliament later that year.

In March 2014, Russia forcibly annexed Crimea after a fraudulent referendum found that 96 percent of voters in Crimea wanted to join the Russian Federation. In eastern Ukraine, armed groups seized territory along the Russian border, using weapons and other support from Moscow, including disguised Russian military personnel. The separatists subsequently proclaimed “republics” and held elections that Western governments and international observers deemed fraudulent. Conflict between the Russian-backed separatists and Ukrainian forces has continued ever since and to date has resulted in over 8,000 civilian and military casualties.

In response to these and other hostile actions by Russia, the U.S. and the EU have imposed a series of sanctions and also provided Ukraine with extensive economic, political, military, and other assistance. Congress has adopted several pieces of legislation to provide Ukraine with billions of dollars in assistance, including resources to promote political, social, and economic reform. Ensuring democratic elections throughout Ukraine is a key goal.

Efforts by France and Germany, along with Ukraine and Russia, to negotiate a lasting ceasefire and a peaceful settlement in Ukraine produced an agreement on September 5, 2014, known as the Minsk Protocol. Fighting broke out shortly thereafter, and its terms were not implemented. A second effort produced a similar but more detailed accord on February 11, 2015, known as Minsk II. Although renewed fighting soon broke out again, in recent months some of the agreed measures have begun to be implemented, albeit slowly and selectively. Russian President Vladimir Putin has reportedly ordered the separatists to engage in limited cooperation in order for Russia to secure relief from Western sanctions, as well as for other purposes.

One of the requirements of Minsk II is to hold local elections in Ukraine in 2015. The Ukrainian government has scheduled these for October 25<sup>th</sup>. However, the Russian-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine continue to refuse to recognize the authority of the Ukrainian government or Ukrainian law and in September announced that they would hold their own local elections on October 18<sup>th</sup>. An international outcry, and more importantly a public statement by Putin that these should be rescheduled, resulted in the separatists announcing a postponement until next year. But because the separatists refuse to allow Ukrainian authorities into the areas they control, the Ukrainian government has announced that the local elections will not be held in these areas because they cannot be guaranteed to be free and fair.

According to the bill sponsor, “the United States has always been a beacon of freedom and opportunity for the rest of the world, and it is important that we stand with the people of Ukraine during this uncertain time.”<sup>1</sup>

## **COST**

A Congressional Budget Office (CBO) cost estimate is not currently available.

## **STAFF CONTACT**

For questions or further information please contact [John Huston](#) with the House Republican Policy Committee by email or at 6-5539.

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<sup>1</sup> See Press Release, “[Cicilline Leads House Effort to Support Free, Fair Elections in Ukraine](#),” July 9, 2014.