

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. 806

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that any attempt by the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin to remain in office beyond May 7, 2024, shall warrant nonrecognition on the part of the United States.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NOVEMBER 18, 2021

Mr. COHEN (for himself and Mr. WILSON of South Carolina) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that any attempt by the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin to remain in office beyond May 7, 2024, shall warrant nonrecognition on the part of the United States.

Whereas the Russian Federation, as a member of the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and the Council of Europe, is bound by international commitments with regard to human rights and the rule of law;

Whereas Article 81(3) of the Constitution of the Russian Federation, as enacted on December 25, 1993, holds that “one and the same person cannot occupy the office of

President of the Russian Federation for more than two consecutive terms”;

Whereas Vladimir Putin has been President of the Russian Federation for two consecutive terms, the first term lasting from May 7, 2000, to May 7, 2008, and the second, current, and final term beginning May 7, 2012, and expiring on May 7, 2024;

Whereas, on July 3, 2020, following votes in both chambers of the Federal Assembly and in regional legislatures and a nationwide popular vote, President Vladimir Putin signed Presidential Decree No. 445 enacting 206 amendments to the Constitution of the Russian Federation, including an amendment waiving the term limit for him personally, allowing him to seek 2 more 6-year Presidential terms after May 7, 2024;

Whereas the enactment of constitutional amendments had been conditioned on approval of such amendments in a nationwide vote, referred to by President Vladimir Putin as a “plebiscite”, that was held between June 25 and July 1, 2020, under the unprecedented conditions of the COVID–19 pandemic;

Whereas the 2020 Russian constitutional plebiscite was marked by widespread reports of organized voter coercion, multiple voting, ballot-stuffing, and violation of the secrecy of the ballot, and by one-sided media coverage in favor of the amendments, while opponents of the amendments were not given airtime in the media and had their campaign rallies prohibited and their websites blocked;

Whereas voting was held over 7 days and was conducted not only in regular polling places but also in makeshift locations, including park benches, car trunks, and shopping

carts, with ballots stored overnight by the electoral commissions with no independent oversight;

Whereas in violation of the laws of the Russian Federation and the commitments of the Russian Federation under the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the Council of Europe, Russian authorities did not invite international observers to monitor the vote and limited domestic observers to those appointed by state-controlled Public Chambers;

Whereas according to opinion polls conducted in the runup to the plebiscite by the Levada Center, 48 percent of Russian voters supported waiving Vladimir Putin's term limit while 47 percent were in opposition;

Whereas according to official figures released by the Central Electoral Commission of the Russian Federation, amendments to the Constitution of the Russian Federation were supported by 78 percent of those who participated in the plebiscite;

Whereas the Central Electoral Commission of the Russian Federation began announcing the results of the plebiscite before voting had concluded;

Whereas according to the Russian nongovernmental organization Golos and independent electoral analysts, approximately 27,000,000 votes, accounting for 37 percent of the official total, were fraudulent, making the plebiscite the most manipulated vote in the modern history of the Russian Federation;

Whereas in a statement following the plebiscite, the leaders of the United States delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Senator Roger Wicker and the late Represent-

ative Alcee Hastings, said that “the outcome of this vote was decided long before the ballots were tallied” and that “State-sponsored fraud, coercion, and obfuscation make it impossible to know the true will of the Russian people”;

Whereas Senator James Risch, then-Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate, has stated that the “sham vote, masquerading as a referendum, has swept away all remnants of Putin’s legitimacy”;

Whereas the Department of State has held that “[a]round the world, as a matter of principle, the United States opposes constitutional amendments that favor incumbents or extend their terms in office, particularly in contexts where necessary conditions for free and fair democratic processes are lacking”;

Whereas the United States and the Russian Federation are participating states of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe; and

Whereas the Document of the Moscow Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe holds that “issues relating to human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law . . . are matters of direct and legitimate concern to all participating States and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of the State concerned”: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That it is the sense of the House of Rep-
2 resentatives that—

3 (1) the 2020 amendments to the Constitution
4 of the Russian Federation were enacted in violation

1 of the laws and international commitments of the
2 Russian Federation;

3 (2) the waiver of the Presidential term limit re-
4 sulting from those amendments is illegitimate; and

5 (3) any attempt by President of the Russian
6 Federation Vladimir Putin to remain in office be-
7 yond the end of his current and final term on May
8 7, 2024, shall warrant nonrecognition on the part of
9 the United States.

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