Mr. President, I

rise today, along with my good friend

Senator MCCAIN, to speak about a resolution

that is of great importance to

the cause of democracy which we have

devoted America to advance at home

and around the world. In November 2003

Senator MCCAIN and I were moved by

Russia’s failure to adhere to democratic

principles to submit a resolution

to hold Russia accountable for the

commitments Moscow made when first

invited to participate in what became

known as the G8. Since then, the situation

in Russia has deteriorated. I am

particularly pleased that Senators

BAYH, BURNS, CHAMBLISS, SMITH, and

DURBIN have joined as original co-sponsors

of this resolution indicating the

increasing Senatorial concern over the

accelerating erosion of democratic and

economic freedom in Russia. As President

Bush returns from his meeting

with President Putin at the summit in

Bratislava, we call once again on the

President of the United States and the

Secretary of State to work with our

partners in the G7 to condition Russia’s

continued participation in the G8

on Russia’s compliance with basic

standards of democracy and rule of

law.

We have a real stake in Russia’s adherence

to democratic norms because

our commitment to Russia’s transition

toward democracy is critical to secure

a peaceful future with Russia. The G7

nations are highly industrialized countries

bound together by fundamental

principles of democracy, rule of law, a

free market system, and respect for

human rights.

The actions of President Putin over

the past few years have raised serious

concerns about Russia’s commitment

to these principles. There is a long list

of well-documented antidemocratic developments

in Russia. The Putin administration

has limited freedom of expression

in Russia by seizing independent

media organizations and suppressing

the activities of independent

journalists, religious organizations,

and nongovernmental organizations

that are all integral components of a

healthy civil society. The Russian government’s

dismantling of Yukos and

the arrest of its founder Mikhail

Khodorkovsky 16 months ago raised serious

doubts about Russia’s commitment

to free market principles and rule

of law as well as respect for property

and shareholder rights. The Federal Security

Services, FSB, play a strong

role in Russia’s power structures in a

manner reminiscent of the KGB in the

old regime. President Putin’s support

for the first fraudulent results in the

Ukrainian presidential elections last

year exhibited disregard for basic

democratic principles. Fortunately, a

democratic outcome prevailed in a new

vote and Yushchenko’s victory—a very

positive development for Ukraine’s and

Russia’s democrats.

We were all moved by the horrific attack

on the schoolchildren and families

of Beslan school last September. There

can be no justification for such brutal

acts and we condemn them with every

fiber of our soul. Our hearts and sympathy

go out to the families of these

victims as they continue to cope with

the loss of their loved ones. The United

States condemns terrorism in all

forms. But the tragedy of the Beslan

school should not be used by President

Putin to retreat from democratic reforms.

In the wake of the Beslan crisis,

President Putin abolished the popular

election of regional governors in favor

of presidential appointees. These

changes to the Russian political system

enhance the power of the executive

branch, while reducing the checks and

balances that make democracies work.

As former Secretary of State Colin

Powell said, ‘‘We understand the need

to fight against terrorism . . . but in

an attempt to go after terrorists I

think one has to strike a proper balance

to make sure that you don’t move

in a direction that takes you away

from the democratic reforms or the

democratic process.’’

Allowing Russia to continue its involvement

in the G8 and to host the

2006 G8 Summit while continuing to

undermine democracy makes mockery

of the very principles that bind the

G8 countries together. This resolution

is not anti-Russian; it is a strong show

of support for Russia’s democrats who

have long urged the United States to

not turn a blind eye to undemocratic

developments in Russia. Sharing a

deeply personal moment from his time

in Soviet Gulag, Natan Sharansky recently

told a group of Senators how

deeply supported he felt when President

Reagan gave his famous ‘‘evil empire’’

speech that honestly addressed

the oppression of the Soviet system.

Since then Russia has come a long

way, but we must speak openly in the

face of the backsliding we are seeing.

As Secretary of State Condoleezza

Rice recently said, ‘‘The real deepening

of our relations can only take place on

the basis of common values.’’ To do

otherwise would be to shirk our responsibilities

as a leader of the democratic

world. And as President Bush said so

eloquently in his inaugural and State

of the Union addresses, America’s security

is advanced by the advancement of

freedom. This resolution puts those

sentiments into concrete action and I

urge my fellow Senators to support it.