



H.Con.Res. 371 – Strongly supporting an immediate and just restitution of, or compensation for, property illegally confiscated during the last century by Nazi and Communist regimes

FLOOR SITUATION

H.Con.Res. 371 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Robert Wexler (D-FL) on June 11, 2008. The resolution was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, but was never considered.

H.Con.Res. 371 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House on September 23, 2008.

SUMMARY

H.Con.Res. 371 resolves that Congress:

- Praises the efforts by those countries in Central and Eastern Europe that have enacted legislation for the restitution of, or compensation for, private and communal religious property improperly confiscated during the Nazi and Communist eras and urges each of those countries to ensure that the legislation is effectively and justly implemented;
- Urges the countries in Central and Eastern Europe which have not already done so to return looted and confiscated properties to their rightful owners or, where restitution is not possible, pay equitable compensation, in accordance with principles of justice and in an expeditious manner that is just, transparent, and fair;
- Calls on the Government of Poland to--
 - immediately enact fair, comprehensive, and just legislation so that persons (or the heirs of such persons) who had their private property seized and confiscated by the Nazis during World War II or subsequently seized by the Communist Polish government after the war are able to obtain either restitution of their property or, where restitution is not possible, fair compensation should be paid; and
 - ensure that such restitution and compensation legislation establishes an unbureaucratic, simple, transparent, and timely process, so that it results in a real benefit to those many persons who suffered from the unjust such confiscation of their property, many of whom are well into their 80s or older;
- Calls on the Government of Lithuania to immediately enact, fair, comprehensive, and just legislation so communities that had communal and religious property seized and confiscated by the Nazis during World War II or subsequently seized by the Communist Polish government after World War II (or the relevant successors to the communal and religious property or the relevant foundation) are able to obtain either restitution of their property or, where restitution is not possible, fair compensation;
- Calls on the President and the Secretary of State to continue to engage in an open dialogue with the Governments of Poland and Lithuania supporting the adoption of legislation requiring, in Poland, the fair, comprehensive, and nondiscriminatory restitution of, or compensation for, private property that was seized and confiscated during the Nazi and Communist eras and, in Lithuania, the fair, comprehensive, and just restitution of Jewish communal and religious property that was seized and confiscated during the Nazi and Communist eras; and
- Calls on the Secretary of State to deliver a report to Congress, every six months, regarding the implementation of this concurrent resolution.

BACKGROUND



LEGISLATIVE DIGEST

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During the period immediately before World War II, the National Socialist (Nazi) government in Germany routinely confiscated the private property of those citizens persecuted during the Holocaust, including many Jews. Various Communist regimes in Eastern and Central Europe also confiscated property due to nationality, religion, and social origin.

Following World War II, the United States passed Military Law 47 in 1949 which supported the return of property confiscated during the Nazi era to its rightful owners, or appropriate heirs. Additionally, Congress has passed several resolutions in previous years supporting property restitution and compensation. Certain European countries, including Poland and Lithuania, have not enacted any legislation regarding compensation for property seized from Jewish persons under Nazi and Communist regimes.

STAFF CONTACT

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