



H.R. 2553 – Public Diplomacy Resource Centers Act of 2007

FLOOR SITUATION

H.R. 2553 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Diane Watson (D-CA) on May 24, 2007. It was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, but never considered.

H.R. 2553 is expected to be considered on the floor on October 9, 2007.

**Note: Related legislation, HR 2843, was ordered to be reported by the Committee on Foreign Affairs, by unanimous consent.*

BACKGROUND

The Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998 (P.L. 105-277) created the position of Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy within the Department of State. Under current law (22 U.S.C. 2651a(b)(3)), the Under Secretary of Public Diplomacy is charged with the following five responsibilities:

- Prepare an annual strategic plan for public diplomacy in collaboration with overseas posts and in consultation with the regional and functional bureaus of the Department;
- Ensure the design and implementation of appropriate program evaluation methodologies;
- Provide guidance to Department personnel in the United States and overseas who conduct or implement public diplomacy policies, programs, and activities;
- Assist the United States Agency for International Development and the Broadcasting Board of Governors to present the policies of the United States clearly and effectively; and
- Submit statements of United States policy and editorial material to the Broadcasting Board of Governors for broadcast consideration.

H.R. 2553 would add the additional responsibility of establishing and maintaining libraries and resource centers at U.S. diplomatic and consular missions.

SUMMARY

H.R. 2553 requires the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy to provide for the establishment of new libraries and resource centers at or in connection with United States diplomatic and consular missions. Additionally, the bill requires the Under Secretary to provide for the maintenance at existing libraries. According to the legislation, the libraries shall be open to the general public and subject to policies and procedures established by the Under Secretary to ensure safety and security. The libraries are also required to show American films that “showcase American culture, society, values, and history.”

The Under Secretary is authorized to accept donations (that pose no cost to the Federal government).

The bill also requires the Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy to submit a report to the appropriate committees containing an evaluation of the functions and effectiveness of the libraries and resource centers.

**Note: The Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy was authorized under section 1334 of the Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998. According to the Department of State, the Commission “is responsible for assessing public diplomacy policies and programs of the U.S. State Department, American missions abroad, and other agencies.”*

COST

At the time of printing, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) had not scored this legislation.

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