

By Congressman David Price -

Madam Speaker, while I do not intend to call for a recorded vote on this resolution, I would like to express my serious reservations about both the content of the measure before us and the circumstances under which it is being considered. Once again, we are being asked to consider a resolution about one of our nation's most important foreign policy challenges that was rushed to the floor without any real chance for debate, without any consideration by the committee of jurisdiction, and without any opportunity for constructive input from the many members of this body – Democrats and Republicans – who care deeply about peace in the Middle East.

This resolution is significant not for what it says, but for what it leaves unspoken. Of course most of us believe that a just and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians will only be achieved through a negotiated two-state solution. And of course any unilateral action by either side – or by a third party – that undermines the peace process should be cause for concern for this Congress, and for anybody else who believes that a two-state solution is still possible.

But that is precisely the point: this resolution says absolutely nothing about the long history of unilateral actions taken by Israeli governments that have progressively undermined confidence in the ability of negotiations to deliver peace. It says nothing about the fact that formal negotiations broke down last week due in large part to Israel's refusal to extend its freeze on unilateral settlement construction for a mere three months. It says nothing about the understandable frustration felt by Israelis and Palestinians alike when they see their leaders fail yet again to make good on their promises of peace.

Moreover, we must ask ourselves whether approving this resolution at this highly sensitive moment would in fact be counterproductive to its stated goal of supporting the peace process. With negotiations on life support and the Administration working overtime to determine the best path forward for the United States, should we really be making definitive statements about what the United States might or might not do if such a unilateral declaration were actually made? Or asking the State Department to shift its focus to preventing other countries from granting diplomatic recognition, rather than continuing to focus on the peace process itself?

One would think that we should rather be urging the Obama Administration to stand firm in its

efforts to bring Israeli and Palestinian leaders back to the negotiating table. The Administration was wise to abandon its offer to give Israel a generous package of security guarantees to do something that is manifestly in its own self-interest to begin with, but Secretary Clinton and Senator Mitchell have made clear their commitment to pursuing alternative courses of action.

Instead of stirring the pot at this delicate time with pronouncements and condemnations, we should be offering hope and encouragement to their efforts.

Ultimately, I agree with the basic points made in this resolution. But I strongly urge the leadership of this House, on both sides of the aisle, to allow for a more balanced, transparent, and deliberative process next time we are asked to express the sense of Congress on a matter of such critical importance to our nation.