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(Original Signature of Member)

115TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. RES.

Urging the Government of Nigeria and Nigeria's political parties to ensure electoral accountability and work toward holding credible, peaceful, and transparent elections in February 2019.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Ms. BASS submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the
Committee on _____

RESOLUTION

Urging the Government of Nigeria and Nigeria's political parties to ensure electoral accountability and work toward holding credible, peaceful, and transparent elections in February 2019.

Whereas it is in the best interest of the United States to maintain a strong bilateral relationship with a politically stable, democratic, and economically sound Nigeria that can play a leadership role in the region and the continent more broadly;

Whereas Nigeria has Presidential elections scheduled for February 16, 2019, and Gubernatorial and National Assembly elections scheduled for March 2, 2019;

Whereas credible elections could further consolidate democratic gains achieved over the last two decades since the transition from military to civilian democratic rule;

Whereas a 2017 survey conducted by Afrobarometer found that 72 percent of Nigerians agreed that democratic elections are the best means of choosing their country's leaders, thus indicating that the country's citizens are deeply committed to democracy;

Whereas collaboration between civil society actors and the international community was a key factor that contributed to successful elections in 2015;

Whereas successive elections in Nigeria have featured varying degrees of violence;

Whereas there have been deeply concerning instances of hate speech by members of both the ruling coalition and the opposition inciting supporters to ethnic violence as a means by which to gain electoral advantage, intimidate electoral rivals, or suppress voter turnout;

Whereas during the Ekiti and Osun Gubernatorial elections in July 2018 and September 2018, respectively, there were concerning incidents in which some elements of Nigeria's security agencies displayed partisanship and a lack of objectivity, which risks escalating tensions within the country;

Whereas Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission has improved the voting process, notably through the introduction of continuous voter registration, the adoption of simultaneous accreditation and voting, improvements to the secrecy of the ballot, and the advancement of smart card reader technology;

Whereas the statement of the September 2018 Joint National Democratic Institute/International Republican Institute Pre-Election Assessment Mission to Nigeria cited remaining challenges and concerns such as delays in finalizing the legal framework for the elections, delayed release of funds for the elections, security threats in the Middle Belt and North East, instances of vote buying, and incitement to violence and disinformation; and

Whereas ensuring transparency in electoral preparations and building public confidence in the electoral process is vital for the success of the upcoming elections: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) reaffirms that the people of the United
3 States will continue to stand with the people of Ni-
4 geria in support of peace and democracy;

5 (2) calls on the Government of Nigeria and all
6 political parties and actors to—

7 (A) take actions to facilitate elections that
8 are credible, transparent, and peaceful in order
9 to support the will of the people and advance
10 the consolidation of democracy and the stability
11 of the broader region;

12 (B) condemn in the strongest terms the
13 use of hate speech and incitement to violence,
14 and refrain from any rhetoric or action that
15 seeks to demonize or delegitimize opponents,

1 sow division among Nigerians, or otherwise in-
2 flame tensions;

3 (C) seek to resolve any disputes over re-
4 sults peacefully, including through the legal sys-
5 tem as necessary; and

6 (D) respect the impartiality of the Inde-
7 pendent National Electoral Commission;

8 (3) calls on the Government of Nigeria to—

9 (A) refrain from deploying security forces
10 in a partisan manner;

11 (B) ensure that security services maintain
12 the highest level of professionalism and impar-
13 tiality in facilitating the electoral process, ena-
14 bling accredited observers and journalists to
15 perform their work, and protecting the right of
16 citizens to exercise their votes freely;

17 (C) move expeditiously to finalize the pro-
18 posed reforms to the legal framework for elec-
19 tions and to ensure the disbursement of req-
20 uisite funds for the 2019 elections; and

21 (D) enforce laws against election malfea-
22 sance, including vote buying, and ensure equal
23 and robust application through such measures
24 as the establishment of the Electoral Offenses
25 Commission and Tribunal;

1 (4) urges all Nigerians to fully and peacefully
2 engage in the electoral process, insist on full enfran-
3 chisement, reject inflammatory or divisive rhetoric or
4 actions, and seek to resolve any disputes over results
5 through the legal system;

6 (5) calls upon the Independent National Elec-
7 toral Commission to sustain confidence and trust in
8 its management of the electoral process by—

9 (A) taking concrete measures to combat
10 vote buying through voter education campaigns,
11 enforcement of laws against voter inducement,
12 and a nationwide ban on cell phones in the vot-
13 ing cubicle;

14 (B) releasing specimen ballots well in ad-
15 vance of election day so that civil society and
16 other electoral stakeholders can conduct suffi-
17 cient education to orient voters;

18 (C) making adequate arrangements to en-
19 sure the participation in the election of inter-
20 nally displaced persons; and

21 (D) taking steps to clean the voters' roll
22 and ensure timely production and distribution
23 of the Permanent Voter Card to new voters;

24 (6) encourages political parties in Nigeria to
25 adhere to and enforce existing codes of conduct that

1 commit parties to democratic electoral standards re-
2 garding campaign use of resources, engagement of
3 voters, peaceful resolution of disputes, and accept-
4 ance of verified and credible results;

5 (7) condemns any efforts on the part of any
6 politicians or political parties in Nigeria to politicize
7 the security and law enforcement agencies;

8 (8) encourages civil society organizations in Ni-
9 geria to—

10 (A) promote the peaceful participation of
11 citizens in the electoral process and draw on ex-
12 isting interreligious and peacebuilding bodies to
13 enhance their efforts;

14 (B) disseminate information about citizen-
15 based observation findings and analysis to in-
16 crease public knowledge and understanding
17 about the conduct of the elections; and

18 (C) continue leading important early warn-
19 ing and response mechanisms to mitigate elec-
20 tion-related violence, including through efforts
21 to monitor hate speech and other forms of in-
22 citement, and further strengthen democratic
23 processes;

24 (9) supports efforts by the Department of
25 State, including the Bureau of Conflict and Sta-

1 bilization Operations, and the United States Agency
2 for International Development to assist election-re-
3 lated preparation in Nigeria, including through pro-
4 grams focused on conflict mitigation; and

5 (10) calls on the United States and other inter-
6 national partners, especially election-focused non-
7 governmental organizations, to—

8 (A) continue to support Nigeria's efforts to
9 address the remaining electoral preparation
10 challenges and identify gaps in which additional
11 resources or diplomatic engagement could make
12 important contributions to the conduct of the
13 elections; and

14 (B) support civil society organizations and
15 media organizations working toward trans-
16 parency and accountability in the use of state
17 resources around the election period.