

**Congressional Human Rights Caucus
Staff Briefing:**

The Proposed UN Human Rights Council: An Update

Tuesday, February 7th, 2006
3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.
2255 Rayburn HOB

Please join us for a briefing on the proposed UN Human Rights Council. The briefing will be held on Tuesday, February 7th, from 3:30 pm—4:30p.m. in room 2255 Rayburn HOB.

The United Nations' Human Rights Commission, the world's most important forum for addressing human rights violations, is broken beyond repair and urgently needs to be replaced. Despite its noble origins as the birthplace of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Eleanor Roosevelt's "Magna Carta for mankind," the Commission has become a largely irrelevant body that has increasingly been hijacked by rogue states. Membership in the Commission by notorious and serial human rights violators such as China, Cuba, Zimbabwe, the Sudan, and Libya mocks its legitimacy and make it difficult to pass resolutions condemning violations.

Last September, at the 2005 World Summit, UN member states, at the urging of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, agreed to strengthen the U.N. human rights machinery by scrapping the Commission in favor of a Human Rights Council capable of promoting universal human rights and addressing gross and systemic violations worldwide. While there is a near consensus on the need for reform, UN member states differ on the size of membership; voting procedures to elect members; the need for an eligibility test for membership; and how potent the Council should be. Spoilers such as Cuba, Egypt, Pakistan and the Organization of the Islamic Conference have been working tirelessly behind the scenes to attempt to weaken the new Council by constraining its ability to censure human rights violators.

Please join the Congressional Human Rights Caucus for this important staff briefing and Q&A period to learn about the status of the negotiations and the future of U.N. protection of human rights.

To discuss these important issues, we will welcome as expert witnesses:

Mark Lagon, *Deputy Asst. Sec. for International Organizations*, U.S. State Department

William K. Davis, *Director*, UN Information Center, Washington, D.C.

Iain Levine, *Program Director*, Human Rights Watch

T. Kumar, *Advocacy Director*, Amnesty International

Jennifer L. Windsor, *Executive Director*, Freedom House

We look forward to seeing you at this important event. If you have any questions, please call Evan Baehr (Rep. Frank Wolf) at x5-5136 or Daria Nashat (Rep. Tom Lantos) at x5-3531. For media inquiries, please contact Lynne Weil (Rep. Lantos) at x5-6735 or Dan Scandling (Rep. Wolf) at x5-5136.

Sincerely,

Frank Wolf
Co-Chair, CHRC
Member of Congress

Tom Lantos
Co-Chair, CHRC
Member of Congress