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Wexler Applauds Passage of Holocaust Property Restitution Resolution

Calls on Central and Eastern European Countries to Pass Fair and Just Restitution Legislation

(Washington, DC) Today, Congressman Robert Wexler, a senior Member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and Chairman of the Subcommittee on Europe, praised the unanimous passage of H. Con. Res. 371, a resolution that urges Central and Eastern European governments to pass fair and comprehensive property restitution legislation that would enable citizens and groups to file claims on property once owned by themselves or their ancestors. During World War II, the Nazi regime ruthlessly stole, seized or confiscated properties, often as an integral part of its persecution of innocent people due to their religion, nationality or social origin, or for the expression of anti-Nazi points of view. The confiscation of property continued during the repressive era of post-war Communism by governments throughout Central and Eastern Europe.

Wexler, the lead sponsor of the resolution, hopes that the passage of H. Con. Res. 371 will assist Holocaust survivors in the United States and globally to receive restitution or compensation for property that was illegally confiscated either by Nazi Germany or subsequently by Communist governments. The resolution also commends those Central and Eastern European governments for enacting property restitution laws and highlights two countries, Poland and Lithuania, that have not enacted property restitution legislation. Currently the Polish government, led by Prime Minister Donald Tusk, is drafting legislation to address outstanding property restitution claims -- although the details of the proposal are not fully known.

"I am heartened that Congress passed this timely resolution, which reaffirms the importance of addressing outstanding property restitution issues and brings a measure of justice to those individuals and groups who suffered immensely under Nazi Germany and under the yoke of repressive Communist governments. It is unconscionable that six decades after the end of the Holocaust and World War II, too many survivors and their heirs, along with thousands of other individuals, are still unable to receive just restitution for property that was stolen, seized or confiscated," said Wexler.

"It is critical that the United States work with our allies in Central and Eastern Europe -- specifically Poland and Lithuania -- to help close some of the most painful chapters in modern history. We deeply appreciate the efforts of Prime Minister Tusk in Poland for his pledge to address this difficult issue. We hope in the coming weeks that his government puts forward positive legislation that establishes an unbureaucratic, simple, transparent, and timely process, so that it results in a real benefit to those individuals who unjustly had their property confiscated."

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Congressman Wexler is Chairman of the Europe Subcommittee and a senior member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and the House Judiciary Committee; and he also sits on the Financial Services Committee.