

Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from Washington, and I rise in support of this resolution.

When I first visited Burma decades ago, I learned what a difference a misguided regime can make. Burma had been a vibrant country known as the Rice Bowl of Asia. Burma had a rich history, fertile land, abundant resources, and a productive population.

In the years following the coup in the early 1960s, the authoritarian regime impoverished the nation and brutalized its people, a pattern that persists today. For more than 20 years, the United States Government has sought to use its influence to try to create conditions for a restoration of democracy and the rule of law in Burma. One tool has been the use of sanctions.

The Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act was signed into law 8 years ago this month, and it requires the President to impose a ban on the import of products from Burma. It blocks U.S. support for loans from international financial institutions and freezes the assets of and bans visas for key members of the military junta that has imposed its will on the Burmese people for decades. I believe these sanctions should be renewed because there is evidence they are working.

Last November, Burmese elections were clearly illegitimate and not a free expression of the will of the Burmese people. But the continuing international pressure on and scrutiny of the junta may be having some tangible effects.

As the international crisis group noted earlier this year, two senior junta leaders have resigned since the elections, and there is some evidence that pressure has eased on some of the minority ethnic groups in the country.

Burma's greatest human rights figure, Aung San Suu Kyi, told the Australian Broadcasting Network yesterday that continued use of targeted sanctions is important. "I think it's much better to have very, very clear targets," she said, and continued, "I do not think it's really very reasonable just to say, 'We want an improvement in human rights, in your human rights record.' It's too vague. The release of political prisoners, the inclusion of all in the political process, the rule of law and so on--pick out the important points and say, 'Well, if you want sanctions

removed, you've got to do these.' "

Mr. Speaker, we need to continue standing with Aung San Suu Kyi and all of the freedom-seeking Burmese. This resolution gives us a chance to do that, which is why I urge my colleagues to join us in supporting this resolution.