

Congressman Trent Kelly's Remarks Regarding H.R. 1755.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of my bill H.R. 1755 – the Uzbekistan Normalized Trade Act. My bill would remove Uzbekistan from Title IV of the Trade Act of 1974, more specifically, the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, and in turn grant Uzbekistan Permanent Normalized Trade relations with the United States. Originally, the Jackson-Vanik Amendment was a provision regarding Jewish emigrants fleeing the U.S.S.R. Because the Soviet Union no longer exists, the Jackson-Vanik Amendment is outdated. This provision has become a roadblock in furthering our relationship with Uzbekistan and, unfortunately, has devolved into a point of leverage to gain concessions.

Uzbekistan has made meaningful constitutional reforms regarding women's rights and free-market access which have encouraged foreign investment. Militarily, Uzbekistan has assisted the United States in withdrawing from Afghanistan and has a robust state partnership with the Mississippi National Guard. Building a strong political and economic partnership with the budding democratic government in Uzbekistan is key as the United States seeks to counter Russian and Chinese influence in the region. While our adversary is preoccupied with its conflict in Ukraine, this is an opportunity for the United States to further deepen our relationship with a former Soviet bloc country.

This bill would help further the domestic and international interests of both countries. Uzbekistan has made significant strides to implement strong, robust diplomatic and economic relations with the United States. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the time to speak today, and I urge the Committee to consider H.R. 1755 in mark-up.