

**US CONGRESS RECOGNIZED THE ONGOING DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION OCCURRING  
IN THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC, WEDNESDAY, MAY 4, 2011**

**SPEECH OF HON. DAN BURTON IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

I rise to recognize the ongoing democratic transition occurring in the Kyrgyz Republic.

This transition began in April 2010 when former President Kurmanbek Bakiyev fled the capital as a result of mass protests over his regime's corrupt and repressive rule. Less than a month after taking power, the interim government of President Roza Otunbayeva formed a commission to draft a new constitution. The constitution produced by this commission was overwhelmingly passed by a national referendum and will take effect after elections are held in December of this year.

Monitors from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe reported that the October 2010 election to fill the 120 seats of the country's legislature, the Jorgorku Kenesh, "constituted a further consolidation of the democratic process and brought the country closer to meeting its international commitments on democratic elections." I applaud this achievement and accept the view of Morten Høglund, head of OSCE observer mission, that "this election reflected the will of the people of the Kyrgyz Republic."

I, along with some of my colleagues, was honored to meet President Otunbayeva when she visited Washington in March to accept the State Department's 2011 International Women of Courage Award. President Otunbayeva deserves this award not only for her leadership in a time of crisis, not only for being the first female Head of State of a Central Asian nation, but foremost for her promotion of a constitution that recognizes her status as an interim leader and prohibits her from running for reelection. President Otunbayeva repeated her intention to step down during our conversation. I believe this willingness to allow the democratic process to move forward is the true sign of the President's courage.

Despite the existence of a new constitution and the upcoming election, the Kyrgyz Republic's democratic transition is not complete.

President Otunbayeva's government, as well as the government of her successor, must continue to fully investigate incidences of violence in the southern part of the country and to prosecute those responsible. In addition the government of the Kyrgyz Republic must continue to work with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to reform its law-enforcement agencies to ensure that these agencies are properly trained to prevent and respond to incidents of violence.

The Kyrgyz Republic is a key ally in the fight against terrorism. The country declared its support for the United States immediately after September 11, 2001 and quickly granted the United States access to Kyrgyz airspace in support of counterterrorism operations in Afghanistan. Since December 2001, the Manas Transit Center located at Manas International Airport near Bishkek has served, according to the U.S. Air Force, as the "premier air mobility hub supporting military operations in Afghanistan." In addition to serving as a key transit point for personnel and

materials moving into Afghanistan, the Manas Transit Center supports aerial refueling and medical evacuation operations. I applaud President Otunbayeva's continued support for the Transit Center and call on her successor to honor the agreement made between the United States and the Kyrgyz Republic in 2009 that guarantees American use of the facility through 2014.

Under the leadership of President Roza Otunbayeva, the Kyrgyz Republic is moving in the right direction; however, the country's democratic transition must continue. I call on the government of President Otunbayeva and the Kyrgyz people to continue developing strong institutions that uphold the fundamental rights of all citizens and residents of the Kyrgyz Republic and to hold free and fair presidential elections in December.