

Rep. Lemmons offered the following resolution:

House Resolution No. 280.

A resolution to memorialize the Congress and the President of the United States to support the humanitarian effort, being led by Venezuelan President Chavez at the behest of the families, to free three kidnapped Americans, Marc Gonsalves, Thomas Howes, and Keith Stansell, captured in Colombia.

Whereas, The stability of South America is vital to the safety of our hemisphere. Marc Gonsalves, Thomas Howes, and Keith Stansell, three kidnapped United States citizens, are being held against their will. Their families have asked Venezuela to intercede via humanitarian effort; and

Whereas, In May 2004, the UN announced that Colombia's 39-year-long drug war had created the worst humanitarian crisis in the Western Hemisphere. More than 2 million people in Colombia have been forced to leave their homes and several Indian tribes are close to extinction. Colombia now houses the third-largest displaced population in the world, with hundreds of thousands of Colombians from both sides of the internal conflict having been killed. As a result, Colombia's internal civil conflict threatens and destabilizes the 5 surrounding countries, compounding economic and social strife through rampant immigration and military fallout throughout the region; and

Whereas, Sporadic peace talks and efforts by the Colombian governments and the various paramilitary and rebel groups throughout the decades have been fruitless. Peace is fundamental for the social and economic development of the people of Latin America and the world, and for peace to be achieved in the region, the proactive cooperation between South and Central American nations is essential. The families of the persons taken captive in the Colombian internal conflict, accompanied by Senator Piedad Cordoba of Colombia, have officially requested the participation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and President Hugo Chavez to mediate in the negotiations between the armed organizations FARC and the ELN and the government of Colombia; and

Whereas, After the expressed approval and support of president Alvaro Uribe of Colombia, Venezuela accepted the crucial role in this humanitarian and historic mission. This effort has also met with the support of President Sarkozy of France, President Lula of Brazil, and the Non-Aligned Nations Movement; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives, That we memorialize the Congress and the President of the United States to actively support through all legal and diplomatic means available this humanitarian endeavor that will also help attain the freedom of three U.S. citizens, Keith Donald Stansell, Marc David Gonsalves, and Thomas R. Howes. We express our support of Venezuela's humanitarian endeavor, independent of national biases, whereby Colombian and United States citizens, brothers and sisters in captivity, may be able to gain their freedom and return to their loved ones thanks to Venezuela's valuable mediation; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States, the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, and the members of the Michigan congressional delegation.