

Congress-Duma Study Group Urges Deeper U.S.-Russia Commercial Ties

Coalition for U.S.-Russia Trade

February 25, 2010

The U.S. and Russia must strengthen “all dimensions” of their relationship, including business ties, according to Congressman Howard Berman (D-CA), who addressed a U.S.-Russia Business Council (USRBC) reception honoring the Congress-Duma Study Group on Capitol Hill on Wednesday, February 24. Several members of Congress involved in shaping U.S. policy toward Russia attended, including Europe Subcommittee Chairman Bill Delahunt (D-MA), Congressional Russia Caucus Co-Chairman Dennis Kucinich (D-OH), and House Foreign Affairs Committee Members Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA) and Brad Miller (D-NC).

Rep. Berman, who chairs the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, spoke as the U.S. Co-Chair of the Congress-Duma Study Group, which this week held its fifth annual meeting of delegates from the U.S. House of Representatives and the State Duma, the lower house of Russia’s parliament. The Duma delegation was led by Konstantin Kosachev, who is also the Chairman of the Duma Committee on International Affairs. Chairman Kosachev agreed with Chairman Berman’s comments.

Despite a busy schedule on Capitol Hill, more than 30 House members were able to join in the Congress-Duma Study Group’s day-long discussions, which began and ended with remarks on trade and economic relations, underscoring the vital importance of commercial ties to the U.S.-Russia relationship. The legislators reportedly spent considerable time examining such topics as Russia’s efforts to join the World Trade Organization (WTO), the potential graduation of Russia from the provisions of the Cold War-era Jackson-Vanik Amendment, and the extension to Russia of permanent normal trade relations (PNTR) status. One specific take-away from the meetings was that U.S. Rep. Delahunt and RF State Duma Deputy Leonid Slutsky were tasked by the two Chairmen with exploring ways in which U.S.-Russia commercial relations can be expanded.