

**AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE
TO H.R. 5708
OFFERED BY MR. SIRES OF NEW JERSEY**

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

1 SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

2 This Act may be cited as the “Nicaraguan Invest-
3 ment Conditionality Act (NICA) of 2016”.

4 SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

5 Congress makes the following findings:

6 (1) In 2006, Nicaragua, under President
7 Enrique Bolaños, entered into a \$175,000,000, 5-
8 year compact with the Millennium Challenge Cor-
9 poration (MCC).

10 (2) After the 2008 municipal elections, the
11 MCC stated that there was a pattern of decline in
12 political rights and civil liberties in Nicaragua.

13 (3) In 2009, the MCC terminated the compact
14 and reduced the amount of MCC funds available to
15 Nicaragua by \$61,500,000, which led to the compact
16 ending in 2011.

17 (4) According to Nicaraguan law, the National
18 Assembly is the only institution allowed to change

1 the constitution but in 2009, Daniel Ortega cir-
2 cumvented the legislature and went to the Supreme
3 Court, which he controls, to rule in his favor that
4 Presidential term limits were inapplicable.

5 (5) The House Committee on Foreign Affairs
6 convened a congressional hearing on December 1,
7 2011, entitled “Democracy Held Hostage in Nica-
8 ragua: Part 1” where former United States Amba-
9 sador to Nicaragua Robert Callahan testified,
10 “First, that Daniel Ortega’s candidacy was illegal,
11 illegitimate, and unconstitutional; second, that the
12 period leading to the elections and the elections
13 themselves were marred by serious fraud; third, that
14 Daniel Ortega and his Sandinista party have system-
15 atically undermined the country’s fragile govern-
16 mental institutions”.

17 (6) From fiscal year 2012 until present, the
18 Department of State found that Nicaragua did not
19 meet international standards of fiscal transparency.

20 (7) On January 25, 2012, a press statement
21 from Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said: “As
22 noted by international observers and Nicaraguan
23 civil society groups, Nicaragua’s recent elections
24 were not conducted in a transparent and impartial
25 manner, and the entire electoral process was marred

1 by significant irregularities. The elections marked a
2 setback to democracy in Nicaragua and undermined
3 the ability of Nicaraguans to hold their government
4 accountable.”.

5 (8) According to the Department of State’s
6 2015 Fiscal Transparency Report: “Nicaragua’s fis-
7 cal transparency would be improved by including all
8 off-budget revenue and expenditure in the budget,
9 auditing state-owned enterprises, and conducting a
10 full audit of the government’s annual financial state-
11 ments and making audit reports publicly available
12 within a reasonable period of time.”.

13 (9) According to the Department of State’s
14 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for
15 2015: “In 2011 the Supreme Electoral Council
16 (CSE) announced the re-election of President Daniel
17 Ortega Saavedra of the Sandinista National Libera-
18 tion Front (FSLN) in elections that international
19 and domestic observers characterized as seriously
20 flawed. International and domestic organizations
21 raised concerns regarding the constitutional legit-
22 imacy of Ortega’s re-election. The 2011 elections
23 also provided the ruling party with a supermajority
24 in the National Assembly, allowing for changes in
25 the constitution, including extending the reach of ex-

1 executive branch power and the elimination of restric-
2 tions on re-election for executive branch officials and
3 mayors. Observers noted serious flaws during the
4 2012 municipal elections and March 2014 regional
5 elections.”.

6 (10) According to the Department of State’s
7 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for
8 2015 in Nicaragua: “The principal human rights
9 abuses were restrictions on citizens” right to vote;
10 obstacles to freedom of speech and press, including
11 government intimidation and harassment of journal-
12 ists and independent media, as well as increased re-
13 striction of access to public information, including
14 national statistics from public offices; and increased
15 government harassment and intimidation of non-
16 governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society
17 organizations.

18 (11) The same 2015 report stated: “Additional
19 significant human rights abuses included consider-
20 ably biased policies to promote single-party domi-
21 nance; arbitrary police arrest and detention of sus-
22 pects, including abuse during detention; harsh and
23 life-threatening prison conditions with arbitrary and
24 lengthy pretrial detention; discrimination against

1 ethnic minorities and indigenous persons and com-
2 munities.”.

3 (12) In February 2016, the Ortega regime de-
4 tained and expelled Freedom House’s Latin America
5 Director, Dr. Carlos Ponce, from Nicaragua.

6 (13) On May 10, 2016, the Supreme Electoral
7 Council announced and published the electoral cal-
8 endar which aims to govern the electoral process.

9 (14) After receiving the electoral calendar for
10 the 2016 Presidential elections, the Nicaraguan po-
11 litical opposition raised concerns and pointed to a
12 number of anomalies such as: the electoral calendar
13 failed to contemplate national and international ob-
14 servations, failed to agree to publicly publish the
15 precincts results of each Junta Receptora de Voto
16 (JRV), and failed to purge the electoral registration
17 rolls in a transparent and open manner.

18 (15) Nicaragua’s constitution mandates terms
19 of 5 years for municipal authorities, which would in-
20 dicate that the next municipal elections must occur
21 in 2017.

22 (16) On June 3, 2016, the Nicaraguan Su-
23 preme Court—which is controlled by Nicaragua’s
24 leader, Daniel Ortega—instructed the Supreme Elec-
25 toral Council not to swear in Nicaraguan opposition

1 members to the departmental and regional electoral
2 councils.

3 (17) On June 5, 2016, regarding international
4 observers for the 2016 Presidential elections, Presi-
5 dent Ortega stated: “Here, the observation ends. Go
6 observe other countries . . . There will be no obser-
7 vation, neither from the European Union, nor the
8 OAS . . .”.

9 (18) On June 7, 2016, the Department of
10 State’s Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and
11 Labor posted on social media: “Disappointed govern-
12 ment of Nicaragua said it will deny electoral observ-
13 ers requested by Nicaraguan citizens, church, and
14 private sector . . . We continue to encourage the gov-
15 ernment of Nicaragua to allow electoral observers as
16 requested by Nicaraguans.”.

17 (19) On June 8, 2016, the Supreme Electoral
18 Council—which is controlled by Nicaragua’s leader,
19 Daniel Ortega—announced a ruling, which changed
20 the leadership structure of the opposition party and
21 in practice allegedly barred all existing opposition
22 candidates from running for office.

23 (20) On June 14, 2016, President Ortega ex-
24 pelled three United States Government officials (two
25 officials from U.S. Customs and Border Protection

1 and one professor from the National Defense Uni-
2 versity) from Nicaragua.

3 (21) On June 29, 2016, the Department of
4 State issued a Nicaragua Travel Alert which stated:
5 “The Department of State alerts U.S. citizens about
6 increased government scrutiny of foreigners’ activi-
7 ties, new requirements for volunteer groups, and the
8 potential for demonstrations during the upcoming
9 election season in Nicaragua . . . Nicaraguan au-
10 thorities have denied entry to, detained, questioned,
11 or expelled foreigners, including United States Gov-
12 ernment officials, academics, NGO workers, and
13 journalists, for discussions, written reports or arti-
14 cles, photographs, and/or videos related to these top-
15 ics. Authorities may monitor and question private
16 United States citizens concerning their activities, in-
17 cluding contact with Nicaraguan citizens.”.

18 (22) On August 1, 2016, the Department of
19 State issued a press release to express grave concern
20 over the Nicaraguan government limiting democratic
21 space leading up to the elections in November and
22 stated that “[o]n June 8, the Nicaraguan Supreme
23 Court stripped the opposition Independent Liberal
24 Party (PLI) from its long recognized leader. The
25 Supreme Court took similar action on June 17 when

1 it invalidated the leadership of the Citizen Action
2 Party, the only remaining opposition party with the
3 legal standing to present a presidential candidate.
4 Most recently, on July 29, the Supreme Electoral
5 Council removed 28 PLI national assembly members
6 (16 seated and 12 alternates) from their popularly-
7 elected positions.”.

8 **SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.**

9 It is the policy of the United States to support—

10 (1) the rule of law and an independent judiciary
11 and electoral council in Nicaragua;

12 (2) independent pro-democracy organizations in
13 Nicaragua; and

14 (3) free, fair, and transparent elections under
15 international and domestic observers in Nicaragua in
16 2016 and 2017.

17 **SEC. 4. INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS.**

18 (a) IN GENERAL.—The President shall instruct the
19 United States Executive Director at each international fi-
20 nancial institution to use the voice, vote, and influence of
21 the United States to oppose any loan or other utilization
22 of the funds of the respective institution for the benefit
23 of the Government of Nicaragua, other than to address
24 basic human needs or promote democracy, unless the Sec-
25 retary of State certifies and reports to the appropriate

1 congressional committees that the Government of Nica-
2 ragua is taking effective steps to—

3 (1) hold free, fair, and transparent elections
4 overseen by credible domestic and international elec-
5 toral observers;

6 (2) promote democracy, as well as an inde-
7 pendent judicial system and electoral council;

8 (3) strengthen the rule of law; and

9 (4) respect the right to freedom of association
10 and expression.

11 (b) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

12 (1) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMIT-
13 TEES.—The term “appropriate congressional com-
14 mittees” means—

15 (A) the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the
16 Committee on Appropriations, and the Com-
17 mittee on Financial Services of the House of
18 Representatives; and

19 (B) the Committee on Foreign Relations,
20 the Committee on Appropriations, and the
21 Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban
22 Affairs of the Senate.

23 (2) INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITU-
24 TION.—The term “international financial institu-
25 tion” means the International Monetary Fund,

1 International Bank for Reconstruction and Develop-
2 ment, European Bank for Reconstruction and Devel-
3 opment, International Development Association,
4 International Finance Corporation, Multilateral In-
5 vestment Guarantee Agency, African Development
6 Bank, African Development Fund, Asian Develop-
7 ment Bank, Inter-American Development Bank,
8 Bank for Economic Cooperation and Development in
9 the Middle East and North Africa, and Inter-Amer-
10 ican Investment Corporation.

11 (c) TERMINATION.—This section shall terminate on
12 the day after the earlier of—

13 (1) the date on which the Secretary of State
14 certifies and reports to the appropriate congressional
15 committees that the requirements of subsection (a)
16 are met; or

17 (2) 5 years after the date of the enactment of
18 this Act.

19 (d) WAIVER.—The President may waive this section
20 if the President determines that such a waiver is in the
21 national interest of the United States.

22 **SEC. 5. ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES.**

23 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that, according to the
24 Organization of American States (OAS) report on the Nic-
25 araguan 2011 Presidential elections, Nicaragua: Final Re-

1 port, General Elections, OAS (2011), the OAS made the
2 following recommendations to the Government of Nica-
3 ragua:

4 (1) “Prepare alternative procedures for updat-
5 ing the electoral roll when a registered voter dies.”.

6 (2) “Publish the electoral roll so that new addi-
7 tions, changes of address and exclusions can be
8 checked.”.

9 (3) “Reform the mechanism for accreditation of
10 poll watchers using a formula that ensures that the
11 political parties will have greater autonomy to ac-
12 credit their respective poll watchers.”.

13 (4) “Institute regulations to ensure that party
14 poll watchers are involved in all areas of the elec-
15 toral structure, including the departmental, regional
16 and municipal electoral councils and polling stations.
17 Rules should be crafted to spell out their authorities
18 and functions and the means by which they can ex-
19 ercise their authority and perform their functions.”.

20 (5) “Redesign the CSE administrative structure
21 at the central and field levels, while standardizing
22 technical and operational procedures, including the
23 design of control mechanisms from the time registra-
24 tion to the delivery of the document to the citizens;
25 the process of issuing identity cards should be timed

1 to the calendar and, to avoid congestion within the
2 process, be evenly spaced.”.

3 (b) **ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSION.**—The Presi-
4 dent shall direct the United States Permanent Represent-
5 ative to the Organization of American States (OAS) to
6 use the voice, vote, and influence of the United States at
7 the OAS to strongly advocate for an Electoral Observation
8 Mission to be sent to Nicaragua in 2016 and 2017.

9 **SEC. 6. STATEMENT OF POLICY.**

10 The Department of State and the United States
11 Agency for International Development should prioritize
12 foreign assistance to the people of Nicaragua to assist civil
13 society in democracy and governance programs, including
14 human rights documentation.

15 **SEC. 7. REPORT ON CORRUPTION IN NICARAGUA.**

16 (a) **REPORT REQUIREMENT.**—Not later than 120
17 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Sec-
18 retary of State, in consultation with the intelligence com-
19 munity (as defined in section 3(4) of the National Security
20 Act of 1947 (50 U.S.C. 3003(4)), shall submit to Con-
21 gress a report on the involvement of senior Nicaraguan
22 government officials, including members of the Supreme
23 Electoral Council, the National Assembly, and the judicial
24 system, in acts of public corruption or human rights viola-
25 tions in Nicaragua.

1 (b) FORM.—The report required in subsection (a)
2 shall be submitted in unclassified form, but may contain
3 a classified annex. The unclassified portion of the report
4 shall be made available to the public.

Amend the title so as to read: “A bill to oppose loans at international financial institutions for the Government of Nicaragua, other than to address basic human needs or promote democracy, unless the Government of Nicaragua is taking effective steps to hold free, fair, and transparent elections, and for other purposes.”.

