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Opening Statement of the Honorable **Ed Royce (R-CA), Chairman**
Committee on Foreign Affairs Hearing:
“Democracy Promotion in a Challenging World”
June 14, 2018

(As prepared for delivery)

“There is no doubt: democracy is on the ropes. Freedom House reports that democracy has declined worldwide over the last decade. The question for us is do we care? And if so, what should we do about it?

We better care. Democracy’s expansion brought unprecedented prosperity.

America is more secure when fewer nations are authoritarian, the unfortunate alternative to democracy. Strongmen regimes justify their repression at home by creating enemies abroad. Since the freedom we enjoy is a threat to authoritarian regimes, the U.S. and our allies are natural targets for their aggression. We have seen this with Russia and China and North Korea. And I’d rather trade and do business with a democracy than a regime.

Democracy is morally just. Members of this Committee have spent countless hours protesting and fighting injustice abroad. Human rights are far better protected in democratic countries, ones without dank prison cells full of political prisoners.

‘Democracy’ is more than just elections. Democracy without the foundation of rule of law, individual liberties, a free press and a culture of tolerance is dangerous populism or mob rule. We’ve seen that in Burma, South Sudan, Gaza and too many other places.

Democratic values are universal. Of course, each country will develop democracy in different ways, and at a different pace. And we may have differences over how best to promote democracy in various countries, especially given our strategic interests. But we should always remember that, as Ronald Reagan noted in his 1982 Westminster speech, free elections are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

At home, we must maintain the decades-old, bipartisan consensus that democracy is a core element of U.S. foreign policy. That is why it’s important to have the National Endowment for Democracy, the International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute here today, and that’s why it’s important that Congress continues to adequately fund these institutions.

Promoting democracy is not easy. There are many stresses, including destabilizing mass refugee flows and accelerating economic change. Mistakes have been made, but lessons have been learned. These include the need to promote women in building and supporting democracy.

Compounding the challenge, authoritarian regimes such as Russia and China are aggressively attacking democracies across the globe, including ours. As one witness will note, these attacks are broad political, economic and cultural. Beijing is spending billions, using the technology revolution to surveil its citizens

at home, while spreading propaganda abroad. I have seen Moscow's assault on its neighbors firsthand. We better wake up to this threat. Now.

For years, our great nation has inspired countless individuals to seek freedom in their homelands. Some have been tortured and murdered for their democratic commitment. Many have succeeded. Our wonderful legacy of leadership on this issue has given us power and influence. But we must protect and nurture our own democracy for that to continue."