

H.R. 8438, Belarus Democracy, Human Rights, and Sovereignty Act of 2020

As ordered reported by the House Committee on Foreign Affairs on October 1, 2020

| By Fiscal Year, Millions of Dollars | 2021 | 2021-2025 | 2021-2030 |
|--|------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Direct Spending (Outlays) | * | * | * |
| Revenues | * | * | * |
| Increase or Decrease (-) in the Deficit | * | * | * |
| Spending Subject to Appropriation (Outlays) | * | 17 | not estimated |
| Statutory pay-as-you-go procedures apply? | Yes | Mandate Effects | |
| Increases on-budget deficits in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2031? | No | Contains intergovernmental mandate? | No |
| | | Contains private-sector mandate? | Yes, Under Threshold |
| * = between -\$500,000 and \$500,000. | | | |

Basis of Estimate

H.R. 8438 would authorize appropriations of whatever amounts are necessary in 2021 and 2022 for assistance to Belarus, primarily to promote democracy, civil society, and human rights. In 2020, the Congress provided almost \$10 million for such assistance to Belarus. The bill expresses the sense of the Congress that the United States should increase its assistance to promote civil society in Belarus. On that basis, CBO estimates that implementing foreign assistance to Belarus under H.R. 8438 would require appropriations of \$11 million each year in 2021 and 2022.

The bill also would require the Administration to report to the Congress on its implementation of the bill and related matters. Using information about the cost of similar reports, CBO estimates that satisfying those requirements would cost less than \$500,000 over the 2021-2025 period. In total, CBO estimates that implementing H.R. 8438 would cost \$17 million over the 2021-2025 period; such spending would be subject to the appropriation of the estimated amounts. The remainder would be spent after 2025.

Finally, the bill would broaden the scope of existing sanctions against the Government of Belarus to include individuals responsible for human rights abuses, repression, and violence or for manipulating the outcome of the recent election in that country.

The sanctions required under H.R. 8438 would deny affected people entry into the United States. CBO estimates that provision would increase the number of people who would be denied visas by the Department of State. Most visa fees are retained by the department and spent without further appropriation, but some fees are deposited in the Treasury as revenues. Denying foreign nationals entry into the United States also would reduce direct spending on certain federal benefits for which they are eligible, such as emergency Medicaid or federal subsidies for health insurance.

In addition, the sanctions would block transactions affecting assets and property that are in the United States or that come under the control of U.S. persons. Enacting the bill also would increase the number of people who would be subject to civil or criminal penalties for violating the sanctions. Penalties are recorded as revenues, and a portion of those penalties can be spent without further appropriation.

Using data about similar sanctions, CBO estimates that few additional people would be affected; thus, enacting the bill would have insignificant effects on revenues and direct spending, and would, on net, reduce the deficit by insignificant amounts.

Mandates

H.R. 8438 would impose private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (UMRA). It would prohibit individuals or entities in the United States from engaging in transactions involving assets and property that have been frozen by sanctions authorized in the bill. The cost of the mandate would be any income lost as a consequence. CBO expects that because a small number of people or entities would be affected, the loss of income from any restrictions imposed by the bill would be small as well. CBO estimates that the cost of the mandate would fall well below the annual threshold established in UMRA for private-sector mandates (\$168 million in 2020, adjusted annually for inflation).

H.R. 8438 contains no intergovernmental mandates as defined in UMRA.

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