

H.R. 496, Ukraine Religious Freedom Support Act

As ordered reported by the House Committee on Foreign Affairs on April 21, 2021

By Fiscal Year, Millions of Dollars	2021	2021-2026	2021-2031
Direct Spending (Outlays)	*	*	*
Revenues	*	*	*
Increase or Decrease (-) in the Deficit	*	*	*
Spending Subject to Appropriation (Outlays)	0	*	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 2032?	No	Contains intergovernmental mandate?	No
		Contains private-sector mandate?	No
* = between -\$500,000 and \$500,000.			

H.R. 496 would declare it U.S. policy to deny visas and entry into the United States to officials of the Russian government, if those officials were responsible for violations of religious freedom in parts of Ukraine controlled by Russia. In addition, the bill would require the Department of State to consider those violations in determining whether to designate Russia as a country of concern in its annual reports on international religious freedom. Designated countries can face a range of consequences such as diplomatic condemnation of their actions and sanctions on trade and financial transactions.

CBO estimates that enacting the bill would increase the number of people who would be denied visas by the Department of State and denied entry into the United States. 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 would reduce direct spending for certain federal benefits for which they are eligible, such as emergency Medicaid or federal subsidies for health insurance.

Using data from similar restrictions on travel to the United States, CBO estimates that few people would be affected by the policy; thus, enacting the bill would have insignificant effects on revenues and direct spending. On net, CBO estimates that enacting the bill would reduce the deficit by insignificant amounts over the 2021-2031 period.

CBO further estimates that considering evidence of Russian violations of religious freedom in its annual reports would cost the department less than \$500,000 over the 2021-2026 period. Such spending would be subject to the availability of appropriated funds.

The CBO staff contact for this estimate is Sunita D'Monte. The estimate was reviewed by Leo Lex, Deputy Director for Budget Analysis.