

For America, Law of the Sea Treaty is a loss of sovereignty

By Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-Fla.) – May 24, 2012

<http://bit.ly/LcMHW4>



Between secret deals with Russia to weaken our missile defense, the relaxation of conditions on military aid to Egypt, and the granting of visas to the progeny of a dictatorial Cuban regime – just to name a few troubling actions – the current Administration's flippant attitude toward America's sovereignty and its role on the world stage is a major cause for concern. This concern is not eased by the Administration's latest efforts: A push to ratify the United Nations' Law of the Sea Treaty.

The Law of the Sea Treaty seeks to regulate and limit the use of the world's oceans for commercial use and environmental management and would determine the extent to which national territory extends off a nation's coasts. In doing so, the treaty ignores centuries of already established international practices regarding freedom of navigation on the seas and would empower multiple U.N.-established bureaucracies.

One cannot be assured that these bureaucracies will fight for the best interests of responsible international actors or of the sea itself. This is particularly troubling when keeping in mind the dubious track records of other U.N. commissions, such as allowing known human rights abusers to lead the U.N. Commission on Human Rights.

Across a number of Congresses, the United States has long resisted the restrictions that would be imposed by the Law of the Sea Treaty, and for good reasons. However, the current administration chooses to continue its pattern of ignoring sensible precedent. Instead, it is pressing the Senate to ratify international standards that would encourage encroachment by foreign actors, burden and constrain the U.S. Navy, and subject the United States to international judgments.

The U.S. House of Representatives recently adopted legislative language, which I wholeheartedly supported, that limits federal funding from being used by any institution or organization established by the Convention on the Law of the Sea. The U. S. Senate should follow the House of Representatives' lead by rejecting any attempt to implement the Law of the Sea Treaty and sacrifice more of our country's sovereignty.

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