

Opening Statement:

I am proud that the United States and South Africa have held cordial relations for nearly my entire life. South Africa has been the United States' largest trading partner in Africa since 2014, is home to hundreds of American businesses and the value of two-way trade reached \$21 billion in 2021.

However, it is clear that the African National Congress of today is no longer the party of Nelson Mandela. While the South African story is one of hope, reconciliation and determination, the ANC today is motivated by perpetuating a system of elite capture, built on corruption and increasing government dependence through its National Democratic Revolution, all while clearly deepening relations with the Chinese Communist Party and Putin's Russia.

As a black man, I carry the knowledge of my own country's historical burden of inequality, as a conservative black man I know that hard work and perseverance pays off. That is clearly not the case among South Africa's ruling party where nearly 30 years into ANC rule the South African people are more dependent than ever on a state that has failed to consistently provide even the most basic services.

Take the example of Black Economic Empowerment, a policy intended to support historically disadvantaged black citizens by providing increased access to the economy, but one that has repeatedly been undermined by corruption and nepotism from ANC elites who have manipulated the scheme for personal gain at the expense of the broader black populace.

The ANC elite are focused on increasing dependence on the state in order to exert control, recently it was publicly stated that there are now 18 million South Africans receiving state grants - compared to 2.5 million in 1999 - with much of these going to provide basic needs, highlighting the failure of the state to generate the meaningful and sustained employment that can only come with a healthy private sector.

Another disastrous policy is the ANC's land reform effort to enforce Expropriation Without Compensation (EWC) and destroy South Africa's Constitutionally protected private property rights. The ANC claims that land reform and EWC are widely popular, but surveys show that only 2% of black South Africans identify land reform as a serious unresolved problem while 80% prioritize economic growth and more jobs over land expropriation. Despite this, the ANC is currently pushing the *Expropriation Bill* and *Land Court Bill* through Parliament to reward themselves for a job poorly done.

There is no country in the world that has remained democratic after removing its population's private property rights and I remain concerned about the ANC's democratic drift away from constitutional rule, especially in light of the Electoral Amendment Act being signed into law in April – legislation that undermines the fundamental democratic principle of proportional representation.

In February I introduced H.Res 145, which criticized specific aspects of the ANC's growing relationship with the Chinese Communist Party and Russia. Specifically, it highlighted South Africa's hosting of military exercises with Russia and China on the anniversary of Russia's further invasion of Ukraine and the fact that South Africa has abstained on multiple United Nations votes condemning Russia's invasion – an invasion that official ANC policy blames on the United States, and attributes to NATO's "eastward expansion". This while the ANC accepted roughly \$826,000 from a firm directly link to the sanctioned Russian billionaire Viktor Vekselberg (Vek-sell-berg). More recently, the ANC hosted the BRICS Conference in Johannesburg and has actively involved itself in Moscow and Beijing's efforts to de-dollarize the global monetary system and rewrite international norms.

Simply put, I believe these actions are inconsistent with South Africa's proud tradition of non-alignment and cannot go unaddressed.

In her meeting with Secretary Blinken yesterday, Foreign Minister Pandor described the United States as “one of the most important partners for South Africa.” The United States has provided over \$8 billion in bilateral aid to South Africa in the past 20 years, much of this through PEPFAR, an incredible, bipartisan effort that has roughly halved South Africa’s national HIV/AIDS mortality rate. The United States is South Africa’s second-largest trade partner and 21% of South Africa’s exports to the U.S. enjoy non-reciprocal duty-free trade status. I have said before and I will say again, South Africa has a choice in what partners to prioritize, but so too does the United States, and I believe it is entirely appropriate to scrutinize the conduct of our important partner when it risks compromising our strong, dynamic bilateral relationship.

In closing, it is my belief that South Africa is currently at an inflection point and I view the next several months as critical in demonstrating whether it will put our important partnership back on track.