

CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

4TH DISTRICT, NEW JERSEY

CONSTITUENT SERVICE CENTERS:

1540 Kuser Road, Suite A9
Hamilton, NJ 08619-3828
(609) 585-7878
TTY (609) 585-3650

108 Lacey Road, Suite 38A
Whiting, NJ 08759-1331
(732) 350-2300

2373 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-3004
(202) 225-3765

<http://chrissmith.house.gov>



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEES:

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**AFRICA, GLOBAL HEALTH, AND
HUMAN RIGHTS**

CHAIRMAN

**WESTERN HEMISPHERE
SUBCOMMITTEE**

**COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND
COOPERATION IN EUROPE**

CHAIRMAN

**CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE
COMMISSION ON CHINA**

CHAIRMAN

DEAN, NEW JERSEY DELEGATION

U.S. Policy Toward Zimbabwe

Chairman Christopher Smith

Hearing of Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health and Human Rights

Excerpts of Remarks

November 2, 2011

Rayburn House Office Building 2200

Good afternoon. Our hearing today will examine the current U.S. government policy toward the Republic of Zimbabwe and consider how our policy toward this southern African nation may develop in the years ahead. Zimbabwe is considering a new constitution that will lead to the elections in 2012 that had been postponed from this year.

There has been mutual hostility between the United States government and the Zimbabwe government of Robert Mugabe since that country became independent in 1980. Mugabe and his supporters blame America for not supporting its liberation struggle, while the United States has criticized Mugabe's government consistently for human rights abuses, especially against its political opponents. With U.S. Ambassador to Zimbabwe Charles Ray encouraging U.S. businesses to invest in Zimbabwe last month, it would seem that U.S. policy is in the midst of a transformation.

Following independence from Great Britain in 1980, Prime Minister Robert Mugabe's policy of political reconciliation was generally successful during the next two years, as the former political and military competitors within ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front and the rival Patriotic Front-Zimbabwe African Peoples Union began to work together. Splits soon developed, however, and PF-ZAPU's leader, Joshua Nkomo was removed from government.

When PF-ZAPU was accused of initiating a rebellion due to the removal of Nkomo from the cabinet, government military forces began a pacification campaign primarily in his base in the Matabeleland area, which resulted in as many as 20,000 civilian deaths.

In part through its control of the media, the huge parastatal sector of the economy and the security forces, the Mugabe government managed to keep organized political opposition to a minimum through most of the 1990s. Beginning in 1999, however, Zimbabwe experienced a

period of considerable political and economic upheaval. Opposition to President Mugabe and the ZANU-PF government had grown, in part due to the worsening economic governance issues. At one point, one U.S. dollar was worth more than 2.6 billion Zimbabwe dollars. Following the seizure of white-owned commercial farms beginning in the 1990s, food output capacity fell 45%, manufacturing output dropped by 29% and unemployment rose to 80%.

The opposition was led by the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), which was established in September 1999. The MDC led the campaign to handily defeat a referendum that would have permitted President Mugabe to seek two additional terms in office. Parliamentary elections held in June 2000 were marred by localized violence and claims of electoral irregularities and government intimidation of opposition supporters. Still, the MDC succeeded in capturing 57 of 120 seats in the National Assembly.

The last four national elections – the presidential election in 2002, parliamentary elections in 2005, harmonized presidential and parliamentary elections in March 2008, and the presidential run-off in June 2008 – were judged to be not free and fair by observers. In the March 2008 elections, two factions of the opposition MDC, known as MDC-T to denote Morgan Tsvangirai's faction and MDC-M for the group led by Arthur Mutambara, gained a combined parliamentary majority. Mugabe was declared the winner of the June 2008 run-off election after opposing candidate Tsvangirai withdrew due to ZANU-PF-directed violence that made a free and fair election impossible.

Negotiations subsequently took place, and in September 2008 the three parties signed the Global Political Agreement (GPA), a power-sharing agreement under which Mugabe would retain the presidency and Tsvangirai would become prime minister. In February 2009 Tsvangirai was sworn in as prime minister, and new cabinet ministers and deputy ministers from the two MDC factions and the ruling party also were sworn in.

There is serious contention within the ruling party for the right to succeed President Mugabe once he leaves office, and added to the division within the opposition, politics in Zimbabwe is in flux to say the least. It is in this environment that the United States faces the challenge of examining our current policy and determining how it might best be adjusted. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today on how the U.S. policy toward Zimbabwe may change to help that nation reach the desired goals of democracy and good governance.