



United States Mission to the OSCE

Right of Reply: Response to the Russian Federation Regarding Freedom of Peaceful Assembly in the United States

As prepared for delivery by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
June 21, 2012

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States wishes to exercise its right of reply to the statement made on June 14 by the esteemed Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation regarding freedom of assembly in the United States, and in particular Public Law 112-98, which was introduced as House Resolution 347, and signed into law on March 8.

P.L. 112-98 is a narrowly focused law focused on protecting the President and the Vice President of the United States. It does not curtail freedom of assembly rights. The law slightly modifies an existing U.S. statute (on "restricted buildings or grounds"). It establishes federal jurisdiction over trespassing at the homes of the President and Vice President and makes it a federal offense to enter the White House or the Vice President's residence or other restricted locations, such as sites visited temporarily by the President or other senior officials, without lawful authority, or to cause disruptions at these locations, within narrow circumstances. As my Russian colleague correctly noted, unauthorized access to the front lawn of the White House would fall under the purview of this law. Demonstrating outside the fence around White House grounds, however, generally would not. Moreover, the law only applies to any person *knowingly* in a restricted area.

Based on other federal regulations, P.L. 112-98 applies only to the homes and grounds of the President and Vice President; the buildings and grounds where the President and others protected by the Secret Service are or will be visiting; and to the buildings or grounds where a special event of national significance will be held. All three categories are quite narrow, but still give the Secret Service the power to safeguard effectively the President and others under their protection.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.