



## INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

### US Congress Confirms Support For Funding For Tibet programs in 2018 Budget

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The United States Congress continued its steady support for Tibet through the provision of approximately \$20 million for Tibet programs in the Consolidated Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2018 (H.R. 1625). The House of Representative approved the legislation on March 22, 2018 with a vote of 256 to 167, and the Senate passed it early on March 23 by a vote of 65-32. The Bill will now need to be signed by President Donald Trump.

“Through this legislation the United States Congress once again confirms its decades-long support for Tibetans’ efforts to preserve their culture and identity,” said Matteo Mecacci, President of the International Campaign for Tibet. He added, “While these programs are but a minuscule part of the overall foreign aid budget, this investment yields big dividends for Tibetans and their efforts to preserve their culture and identity.”

The Bill funds several long-standing programs, including:

- Grants to non-governmental organizations to support sustainable development and cultural traditions on the Tibetan plateau (not less than \$8 million);
- Humanitarian assistance for Tibetan refugees (grants traditionally set at \$2.5 million);
- Programs for Economic Development in Tibetan Exile Communities (not less than \$6 million);
- Programs to strengthen the capacity of Tibetan institutions and governance (not less than \$3 million). This is a new provision in the 2018 budget that increases the overall funding for Tibet programs in 2018;
- Funding for the Tibetan Scholarship and Ngwang Choephel fellows programs (more than \$1.4 million);
- Funding for the office of the Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues at the State Department (\$1 million); and
- Funding for independent broadcasting into Tibet by Radio Free Asia and Voice of America; and democracy grants through the National Endowment for Democracy.

The \$1 million for the Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues is Congress’ specific dollar recommendation for this office. The position has been vacant for a year, although the office has remained staffed and the Trump Administration has confirmed that it will retain the office.

Since 1988, starting with the creation of the Tibetan Scholarship Program, Congress has initiated and funded at least nine U.S. government programs that benefit Tibetan in exile and inside Tibet through humanitarian assistance, economic development, educational assistance, and other efforts. These

programs are annually a part of the State-Foreign Operations Appropriations bill, which has been incorporated into the larger omnibus Consolidated Appropriations Act.

ICT has been advocating, since 1988, to Congress to support the Tibetans' efforts to preserve their culture, identity and traditions threatened by the oppressive policies of the Chinese government.

Even as the Congress was finalizing the FY2018 budget, President Donald Trump presented to Congress, on February 12, 2018, his budget proposal for FY2019. The proposal, as in the 2018 President's budget, again includes cuts to the Tibet programs. ICT has already reached out to concerned Members of Congress to urge for continued funding at the existing level.