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<https://www.savetibet.org/international-campaign-for-tibets-30-years-of-service-to-the-tibetan-people>

## **International Campaign for Tibet's 30 Years of Service to the Tibetan People**

On March 6, 2018, a special event in the United States Congress marked the International Campaign for Tibet's 30 years of service to the Tibetan people. Congressional leaders and staffers, State Department officials, members of the NGO community, Tibetan Americans, and Tibet supporters who were in town for the Tibet Lobby Day attended it.

Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi, Representatives James P. McGovern (D-MA) and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), Representative Ngodup Tsering of the Office of Tibet, ICT Board Member Kasur Tempa Tsering, former political prisoner Ngawang Sangdrol, and ICT Board Chairman Richard Gere addressed the gathering.

In March 1988, the International Campaign for Tibet was established in Washington, D.C. to support the Tibetan people and the vision of H.H. the Dalai Lama. Speakers and participants used the event as an opportunity to honor the dedication and support shown to the people of Tibet and His Holiness the Dalai Lama by Members of Congress, successive U.S. administrations, and friends from all over the world.

ICT Vice President Bhuchung K. Tsering welcome everyone on behalf of President Matteo Mecacci, who was unable to attend. He said when ICT was founded, 30 years ago, the United States government did not have a positive coherent policy toward Tibet or His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Thirty years later, through the support of prominent political leaders from both parties, the U.S. is devoted to providing policy and programmatic support to the Tibetan people thanks to the passage of the Tibetan Policy Act of 2002. Today, no matter which party is in power, it is the policy of the United States to protect the distinct heritage of the Tibetan people and to support resolution of the Tibetan issue through negotiations between H.H. the Dalai Lama or his representatives and the Chinese government.

He mentioned senior Tibetan leaders Tenzin Tethong and Lodi Gyari, who were not only the Dalai Lama's representatives, but also headed ICT, working to fulfil his vision. He also recognized some members of the current ICT Board as well as present and former staff who were in the room.

He also introduced ICT's new logo. This is part of the process of modernizing our communication platforms to build upon the movement as well as to capture the attention of a millennial audience. The new ICT logo is a fresh and modern take on the existing flame and word mark.

The New York based consultancy firm, Opperman Weiss, offered pro bono support in developing this logo as well as detailing the ICT brand and identity.

A special video message from His Holiness the Dalai Lama was screened. In it, His Holiness offered "my deep appreciation" for ICT's 30 years of "showing genuine support for Tibetan cause". He said, "I always describe that the supporter of Tibetan cause is not pro-Tibetan, but rather pro-justice."

Detailing the importance of Tibetan culture and his efforts at finding a solution for Tibet that did not ask for independence, the Dalai Lama called "still more action or more activities, in different parts of the world".

He said we should look at the wider picture of Tibetan issue adding, "I think raise awareness of Tibet issue, not only just human rights issue, but culture, too."

Congressman Jim McGovern in his remarks said he believed in the mission of ICT, believed that the Tibetan people should live their life as they choose, and believed that the Dalai Lama should be able to go home, after nearly 60 years of exile. "He has that right," he said.

Congressman McGovern urged Tibet supporters to renew our activism and build even a stronger movement. He said we need to make the Chinese government sit up and take notice, and that the 30th Anniversary should be a call to action is to pass the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act; say no to Chinese effort to control the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama, to secure the release of Tibetan political prisoners and to free the Panchen Lama.

The Congressman also said the Global Magnitsky Act must be used to sanction the Chinese officials, and that it should start with those responsible for the death of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche. He also urged Tibet supporters to engage with our allies and parliamentarians throughout the world and to elevate the profile of the Central Tibetan Administration, saying that we need to invest in energy to make the Chinese government go back to the negotiating table and re-establish the Tibetan Chinese dialogue. He also noted we need to insist that that corporations that do business in Tibet do their part to protect the rights of the Tibetan people and all people in China.

Finally, Congressman Jim McGovern said he agreed with the Dalai Lama in saying that this movement is not simply pro-Tibet, but that it is rather a pro-justice movement. He feels now was the time to do something, saying we cannot wait 50 years, and that we must come together and think outside the box to develop new strategies.

Congresswoman Ros-Lehtinen, in her remarks, said she had the privilege of working with so many of ICT staff. She recalled the time of working together with Congressman Tom Lantos on the Congressional Gold Medal to the Dalai Lama. She said that she is working with ICT on two more initiatives: H.R. 1872, the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act, to deny visas to Chinese officials who are responsible for not permitting Americans to have access to Tibet. She added that she was in touch with some of her colleagues and that there is "good common ground" for the legislation to move forward.

Congresswoman Ros-Lehtinen also talked about her new resolution on Tibet, saying that she needed to thank ICT's staff for helping her craft it in the correct way. She introduced it along with Democratic Congressman Eliot Engel. She said this resolution is a comprehensive outline for the way forward for US policy on Tibet, and that we have witnessed the Tibetan issue being pushed to the periphery of our foreign policy, which is something that needs to be fixed. She added that "with the support of ICT we are doing our best to reverse that; it should be central."

Ros-Lehtinen referred to the Dalai Lama's message about the Tibet issue being pro-justice and said it is in the American spirit to be pro-justice. She said her resolution details the long history of strong support for Tibet in the Congress and lays out priorities for moving forward: pressing Beijing to enter into a dialogue with the Dalai Lama, leading to a negotiated settlement on the Tibetan issue; calling for release of all political and religious prisoners of Tibet; and appointment of a Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues in the State Department.

Congresswoman Ros-Lehtinen characterized Beijing's policies as not only immoral and unjust, but also threatening to the stability of a crucial area for US interest. She said, "For as long as I can remember, ICT has been leading the charge here in Congress, showing the world that we stand with the people of Tibet in their struggle for freedom." She concluded by saying our efforts will soon bear fruits and we will

be back here celebrating the arrival of long overdue freedom for the people of Tibet, a celebration of their history, culture, and language.

Representative Ngodup Tsering offered his greetings to ICT on behalf of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration. He said ICT has long been an anchor for the cause of Tibet and expressed his gratitude to those who served ICT in the past and those who are serving now, in particular Chairman Richard Gere. Addressing Richard Gere, Representative Tsering said, "You have made our struggle, your struggle. The Central Tibetan Administration is deeply grateful for your unconditional love and support through your work at ICT. Tibet will never forget you."

Highlighting the new challenges from the Chinese said, Representative Tsering said he looked to ICT and Tibetan support groups to come up with more renewed ideas to address them. He said the Office of Tibet will work hand in hand in this. He also thanked Congressional leaders for all the inspiration and support you have extended to the Tibetan people.

ICT Board member Tempa Tsering said ICT is a very special organization and thanked the many people who have worked for ICT and who have stood by ICT. He said ICT's work is not finished, as the Tibet issue is yet to be resolved. Outlining why people should support the Tibetan issue among all the issues out there, he said it is an issue of non-violence; an issue based on truth and justice; an issue with global implication, for example the Tibetan environment; and one with strategic implication for peace, located in the heart of Asia.

Former political prisoner Ngawang Sangdrol, in her remarks, detailed her experience of imprisonment by the Chinese authorities and how support by the United States and others helped her. Talking about the Congressional support, she said Tibetans in Tibet "know what you do for Tibet, but they cannot say that." "I thank you on their behalf," she added. She also expressed her heart-felt appreciation to ICT for supporting her and for its work on Tibet.

She concluded, "Now I live in a free country, but every day I'm worried about countless Tibetans who are still suffering today and so I am here today to request your help and support to push China to release the Tibetan political prisoners. "She urged for pressure "on the Chinese government to have some result-oriented support of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's middle way approach."

Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi opened her remarks saying that the Tibetan issue has been a bipartisan issue for the United States. Referring to those Tibetans who are incarcerated, she said she wanted to be sure that these people know that we never forget them. She said they are a priority for her and other Tibet supporters, adding that we want the Chinese government to know that we have not forgotten the Tibetans.

She also detailed her trip to India and Tibet leading a bipartisan Congressional delegation. Identifying the fundamentals of the Tibetan issue, she said that when the Chinese officials told her about how they had gilded the roof of the temples, she said she was not interested in gilded temples, but that she was instead interested in what the Chinese allow to go into the minds of Tibetan children. She said the problem was that the Chinese authorities are blocking them from learning their language, culture, religion and being Tibetan.

Leader Pelosi referred to the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act as one initiative through which we can bring attention to the Tibetan issue.

The final speaker was ICT Chairman Richard Gere, who referred to the Tibetan cause as "a family business". He said there was no monetary gain associated with it, but, as the Dalai Lama said, it is about justice, compassion, and love. Gere said it is about people who tell the truth. He said the Tibetan issue

can teach you how to live with each other and embrace each other. Recalling his encounter with the Tibetans, starting Tibet House, his own foundation and being involved with ICT, he said that these acts have been a personal privilege for him. He described those in the room as "troublemakers," working for the good of the Tibetan people.

He praised the congressional leaders for their continued support. Highlighting how much Tibetans respect Leader Nancy Pelosi he recalled an incident in January when he met a Tibetan in Bodh Gaya. This person did not speak English, and carried a khata (a Tibetan greeting scarf) and spoke at length to a translator. When Richard asked his colleague what this person was saying, the translation was, "I wanted to give you a khata, because I understand you know Nancy Pelosi."

He referred to the video message by the Dalai Lama and said it was an incredible opportunity to encounter the Dalai Lama. He said when the Congressional Gold Medal was bestowed on the Dalai Lama, it was a transcendental moment. It was not just spiritual; it was redefining to him what it is to be an American. When he listened to the President, Congressional leaders, the First Lady, speaking at the Gold Medal award ceremony, he could not tell who was a Democrat or a Republican. He said they were all speaking in the highest possible language in their hearts. He remembered coming out of the event thinking now he understood what our forefathers were talking about. Finally, Gere said that the notion that we are all in this together is "really radical." He concluded with that thought, and thanked everyone for being on this road together for 30 years.

## 30 Years of ICT: Accomplishments and Milestones

1988	ICT opens its first office in Washington, D.C.
1990	ICT is involved in efforts to secure 1,000 immigrant visas to the United States for Tibetan refugees
1991	ICT assists in organizing a meeting between His Holiness the Dalai Lama and President George H.W. Bush  Following ICT advocacy, Voice of America Tibetan Service is established and begins broadcasting in Tibet, China and elsewhere  President George H.W. Bush signs into law legislation that declares Tibet an occupied country under international law
1993	ICT assists in the first meeting between His Holiness the Dalai Lama and President Bill Clinton  ICT publishes a ground-breaking report: Nuclear Tibet
1995	ICT hosts a major visit of His Holiness the Dalai Lama around the U.S.  His Holiness the Dalai Lama presents ICT's Light of Truth award for the first time to A.M. Rosenthal, Richard Gere, Lavinia Currier and Michael Currier

ICT representatives attend the UN 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing

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- 1996      After years of advocacy, Radio Free Asia is established and begins broadcasting into Tibet, China and elsewhere in Tibetan
- ICT releases *A Season to Purge: Religious Repression in Tibet*, highlight the detention of the Panchen Lama
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- 1997      ICT coordinates the hosting of the third meeting of the World Parliamentarian's Convention on Tibet with His Holiness the Dalai Lama and delegates from 27 countries in Washington, D.C.
- U.S. Department of State establishes the Office of the Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues after four years of advocacy by ICT
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- 1999      ICT produces "Tibet's Stolen Child" a documentary about the plight of the Panchen Lama
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- 2000      ICT and a coalition of partners succeed in making the World Bank cancel its support for China's resettlement project in a Tibetan area
- ICT opens an office in Amsterdam to expand its outreach into Europe
- Tibet is featured as part of the Smithsonian's Folklife Festival and His Holiness the Dalai Lama addresses thousands on the National Mall
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- 2001      ICT establishes the Tibetan Youth Leadership Program
- ICT launches a Chinese language website, [liaowangxizang.net](http://liaowangxizang.net), on Tibet
- ICT assists in the first meeting between His Holiness the Dalai Lama and President George W. Bush
- An International Religious Freedom Award is bestowed on ICT in recognition of its "tireless commitment in advancing religious freedom for the Tibetan Buddhist people."
- ICT releases *Jampa: The Story of Racism in Tibet* and attends the United Nations World Conference Against Racism in South Africa
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- 2002      After six years of advocacy China releases political prisoner Ngawang Choephel who is received upon arrival by ICT
- ICT releases *Dangerous Crossings*, the first annual report that examines the plight of Tibetans who cross the border into exile

ICT helps secure passage of the Tibetan Policy Act through direct and grassroots lobbying. The Act institutionalizes programmatic and political support for Tibet in the U.S. government

ICT establishes an office in Berlin, Germany

The first of nine rounds of dialogue between representatives of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the People's Republic of China take place in Beijing

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2005      The Rowell Fund for Tibet is established to provide grants to Tibetan photographers, journalists, women activists and environmentalists in memory of the late Galen and Barbara Rowell

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2006      Phuntsok Nydron, the last of the imprisoned "singing nuns" is released after 15 years in prison

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2007      ICT is awarded the prestigious Geuzen Medal by the Dutch Geuzen Resistance 1940-1945 Foundation

His Holiness the Dalai Lama is awarded the highest civilian honor in the United States, the Congressional Gold Medal by the U.S. Congress. ICT members helped support this Congressional initiative

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2008      Protests erupt across the Tibetan plateau

Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi leads a bipartisan delegation of Members of the U.S. Congress to Dharamsala, India. Accompanied by ICT Vice President, Mary Beth Markey

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2009      ICT establishes an office in Brussels, Belgium

Tapey, a Tibetan monk, sets himself on fire as a form of protest. His is the first reported self-immolation inside Tibet in modern times

ICT organizes the first Tibet Lobby Day in Washington, D.C. which brings Tibetan-Americans and Tibet supporters from across the United States to lobby the U.S. Congress

President Obama sends a delegation to Dharamsala to meet with His Holiness the Dalai Lama

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2010      President Barack Obama meets His Holiness the Dalai Lama and commends his Middle Way Approach

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2011      ICT joins the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)

- 2012      His Holiness the Dalai Lama transfers governmental duties to a democratically elected Tibetan leadership
- ICT establishes a partnership with the Australia Tibet Council
- ICT publishes *60 Years of Chinese Misrule: Arguing Cultural Genocide in Tibet*
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- 2014      ICT findings on self immolations in Tibet presented at UN Human Rights Council
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- 2015      ICT highlights enforced disappearances in Tibet at the 27th Human Rights Council Session
- ICT works for Congressional passage of resolutions highlighting China's policies in Tibet and honoring His Holiness' contributions on his 80th birthday
- ICT publishes *Blue Gold from the Highest Plateau: Tibet's Water and Global Climate Change*, and presents the report at the Paris Climate Change Conference, COP21
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- 2016      A U.S. Congressional delegation, led by Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi, visits Tibet
- Golog Jigme, a respected Tibetan Buddhist monk, teacher and former political prisoner, gives powerful testimony in a U.S. Congressional hearing
- ICT establishes a partnership with the Tibet Society (TS)
- ICT hosts a special event for members, A Conversation with His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama and ICT Chairman Richard Gere in Washington, D.C.
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- 2017      A bipartisan Congressional delegation led by Leader Nancy Pelosi and accompanied by ICT President Matteo Mecacci travel to Dharamsala, India for meetings with His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan leadership for the first time since 2008
- Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act is introduced in the House and the Senate. It calls for American citizens to have access to Tibet equal to what Chinese citizens have to the United States
- ICT publishes *Blue Gold from the Highest Plateau: Tibet's Water and Global Climate Change*, and presents the report at the Paris Climate Change Conference, COP21