



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Supporters of reciprocal access to Tibet take their message to Senate offices on special Lobby Day

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United States Senate offices on Capitol Hill and across the country were buzzing on Wednesday as supporters of the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act came out en masse to lobby for the bill.

The special Lobby Day organized by the International Campaign for Tibet brought together ICT members, Tibetan associations and other activists who urged their Senators to pass the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act, which would shine a light on China's human rights violations against the Tibetan people and address China's unfair relationship with the US.

"The Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act is one of the most important pieces of legislation in the history of the Tibetan-American community, so it was vital to share our support for the bill with our elected leaders," ICT Vice President Bhuchung K. Tsering said. "We are grateful to Senators and Senate staff across the country for meeting with our members and to everyone who showed up with pride and enthusiasm on Wednesday to lobby for the bill."

Halls of Capitol Hill

Holding signs that read "Support Reciprocal #AccessToTibet," the amateur lobbyists roamed the halls of Capitol Hill to deliver petitions and letters to the offices of all 100 US Senators.

They also met with legislative staff to explain the urgency of [passing the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act, which would deny entry to the US for Chinese officials who prevent Americans from entering Chinese-occupied Tibet.](#)

The bipartisan bill was approved by the House of Representatives last month. But it needs to pass the Senate—where it was introduced by Sens. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) and Tammy Baldwin (D-Wisc.)—before the end of the year, or it will have to start all over again in the House in 2019.

In office after office, supporters of the bill explained its importance to America's national interests.

In recent years, politicians from both major parties have become increasingly outraged at China's unfair treatment of the US and have demanded that China's government reciprocate on issues of trade as well as freedom of access for American journalists, diplomats and citizens.

Heartbreaking personal stories

As they met with Senate staff, Tibetan-Americans also shared heartbreaking stories about how lack of access to their ancestral land has affected them personally. Several mentioned that they tried to take their elderly parents to visit Tibet before they died but were prevented from doing so because of China's discriminatory policies.

The date for the Lobby Day was chosen not just because the clock is ticking down on the legislative calendar, but also because it was the anniversary of the [2007 Congressional Gold Medal ceremony for the Dalai Lama](#).

Even though several Senators were home campaigning on Wednesday, one group of activists was able to meet with Sen. Ed Markey (D-Mass.) in person.

Lobbying across the country

Capitol Hill was hardly the only site of activity during the Lobby Day. Supporters of reciprocal access to Tibet also showed up at Senate offices in their home districts in California, New York, Virginia and other states.

Earlier in the week, members of the Vermont Tibetan Association met with Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) in Burlington, Vermont to personally thank him for cosponsoring the bill.

ICT had created an online action page for Americans to send petitions to their Senators to support the bill. More than 7,000 petitions have been sent from all over the US so far.

[Use ICT's online action page to tell your Senators to support reciprocal access to Tibet.](#)