



## INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

### China's claims about easing Tibet travel are an insufficient response to Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act

<http://www.savetibet.org/chinas-claims-about-easing-tibet-travel-are-an-insufficient-response-to-reciprocal-access-to-tibet-act>

January 11, 2019

The Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act's two lead sponsors in Congress have challenged the Chinese government to show through concrete action that it is opening up Tibet to the outside world.

Rep. Jim McGovern (D-Mass.) and Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) were reacting to reports in Chinese state media from the Tibetan capital of Lhasa that China was changing its policy regarding access to Tibet, a historically independent country that China has occupied for 70 years.

A China Daily report on Jan. 10, 2019 says, "Overseas tourists will find it easier and faster to apply for a travel permit to Tibet this year as the regional government makes efforts to boost tourism."

In response, Sen. Rubio tweeted on Jan.11, 2019: "Seems the new Reciprocal Access to #Tibet law has gotten the attention of the Chinese Gov't. Time will tell if they open up Tibet & stop brutally repressing the Tibetan people."

Rubio also had a message for the Trump Administration. His tweet said, "In the meantime, @StateDept should swiftly implement the bill."



The Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, of which Rep. McGovern is a co-Chair, said in a tweet on Jan.11, 2019, "The Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act, led by @RepMcGovern and former @RepHultgren and approved last Congress, has clearly caught China's attention: After new US law China plans to issue faster permits for foreigners to visit Tibet."



**Human Rts Commission** @TLHumanRights · 19m

The Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act, led by @RepMcGovern and former @RepHultgren and approved last Congress, has clearly caught China's attention: After new US law China plans to issue faster permits for foreigners to visit Tibet



**After new US law, China plans to issue faster permi...**

Amid a bitter row with the US over a new law banning Chinese officials who deny American citizens, government officials and journalists access to Tibet, Chi...

[business-standard.com](http://business-standard.com)



## Reciprocal access to Tibet

On Dec. 19, 2018, [President Trump signed into law](#) the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act (RATA), which requires the State Department to deny or revoke US visas for Chinese officials who are responsible for keeping American journalists, diplomats and ordinary citizens out of Tibet.

The China Daily report quotes a Chinese government official in Lhasa saying, "The Tibet autonomous region plans to cut the time for issuing travel permits to overseas tourists by half in 2019."

"Since RATA began making its way through Congress, Chinese officials have made one misleading statement about this legislation after another out of fear of Americans' enduring support for the Tibetan people. Today's announcement should be viewed no differently," said Matteo Mecacci, President of the International Campaign for Tibet.

Mecacci added, "The US government—and all US citizens who care about human rights and democracy—must continue to pressure the Chinese government to end its isolation of Tibet and restore basic freedoms to Tibetans."

## Heavy restrictions

One of the goals of RATA is to make it easier for American officials and journalists to enter Tibet so they can report on the situation of the Tibetan people.

As the text of the legislation notes, the US "submitted 39 requests for diplomatic access to the Tibet Autonomous Region between May 2011 and July 2015, but only four were granted."

Similarly, with the exception of a few highly controlled trips, Chinese authorities have repeatedly denied requests for American journalists to visit Tibet.

[RATA says](#) that "Tibetan-Americans, attempting to visit their homeland, report having to undergo a discriminatory visa application process, different from what is typically required, at the Chinese embassy and consulates in the United States, and often find their requests to travel denied."

China's policy on access to Tibet will come under Congressional scrutiny at the end of March 2019. RATA requires that within 90 days of its enactment (which will be in March), "the Secretary of State shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees, and make available to the public on the

website of the Department of State, a report that includes an assessment of the level of access Chinese authorities granted diplomats and other officials, journalists, and tourists from the United States to Tibetan areas.”