



## INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

### **Sens. Sanders and Gardner cosponsor Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act, signaling strong support for its approval this year**

<https://www.savetibet.org/sens-sanders-and-gardner-cosponsor-reciprocal-access-to-tibet-act-signaling-strong-support-for-its-approval-this-year/>

November 14, 2018

The Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act continues to gain steam with United States Sens. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and Cory Gardner (R-Colo.) cosponsoring the bill, signaling strong support for it to be approved in the Senate and signed into law before 2018 ends.

Sanders, considered a top contender for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2020, and Gardner, chair of the National Republican Senatorial Committee as well as the Asia Subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, cosponsored the bill on Nov. 13, the first day Congress was back at work following the midterm elections.

“The growing, bipartisan support for this legislation shows that reciprocal access to Tibet is a priority for all Americans,” said Matteo Mecacci, president of the International Campaign for Tibet. “Momentum is building, and the responsibility lies with the Senate to pass the bill this year.”

### **Goals of the legislation**

Known as RATA, the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act is based on the widely accepted diplomatic principle of reciprocity, which calls on countries to give equal rights to one another’s citizens.

China—which has occupied and ruled Tibet for nearly 70 years—does not reciprocate. Although Chinese citizens travel freely throughout the US, American journalists, diplomats and tourists are banned from Tibet.

Under RATA, the Chinese officials who keep Americans out of Tibet will be denied entry to the US.

One of the [goals of the legislation](#) is to pressure China into letting international observers into Tibet so they can help expose China’s human rights violations against the Tibetan people.

## Tragic situation

Right now, China denies Tibetans' religious freedom, arrests them for such crimes as celebrating the Dalai Lama's birthday, tortures them for protesting peacefully and even shoots them dead if they try to flee into exile.

Given that level of repression, it's no surprise that [since 2009, 154 Tibetans have resorted to the tragic act of self-immolation](#), lighting their own bodies on fire in a final, desperate attempt to get the world's attention.

Earlier this month, [a 23-year-old Tibetan named Dorbe self-immolated in the Tibetan region of Amdo, saying "May the Dalai Lama live long!" as he died.](#)

"RATA is vital for the people of Tibet, who have long suffered in silence because China prevents the outside world from reaching them," Mecacci said. "It's also important for Americans who deserve the same rights as Chinese citizens, including the thousands of Tibetan-Americans who should have the freedom to see their ancestral land and reunite with their family members."

## The bill could soon become law

The US House Judiciary Committee [approved RATA unanimously on July 25](#), and the full House of Representatives [passed the bill two months later](#).

In the Senate, the bill was introduced by Sens. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) and Tammy Baldwin (D-Wisc.) and now has 10 cosponsors.

Thousands of supporters have advocated for RATA by sending petitions and letters to their Senators and using #AccessToTibet on social media.

Last month, [the International Campaign for Tibet and Tibetan associations across the country organized a special lobby day calling on Senators to cosponsor the legislation.](#)

Rubio said he is confident that if the bill reaches the floor of the Senate, [it would pass without a vote, and President Trump would sign it into law.](#)

"We believe there's support for it," Rubio said, "and we're working hard to get it accomplished."