



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

House committee passes resolution supporting Tibetan autonomy

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October 1, 2020

The House Foreign Affairs Committee today approved a resolution promoting autonomy for the Tibetan people and offering them support on a number of issues they face under the repressive rule of the Chinese government.

With China taking unprecedented steps to wipe out Tibetans' unique identity, the committee unanimously approved House Resolution 697, at a hearing on Oct. 1, 2020.

The bipartisan resolution, titled "A resolution affirming the significance of the advocacy for genuine autonomy for Tibetans in the People's Republic of China and the work His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama has done to promote global peace, harmony, and understanding," can now move to the floor of the House for a vote by the full chamber.

What the resolution does

The resolution tackles a number of issues confronting the people of Tibet, a historically independent country that China annexed more than 60 years ago.

The resolution:

1. Affirms the cultural and religious significance of the goal of genuine autonomy for the people of Tibet, as well as the deep bond between the American and Tibetan people.
2. Supports the efforts by the Dalai Lama and Tibetan leadership to achieve genuine autonomy through negotiations with the People's Republic of China without preconditions.
3. Praises the Dalai Lama's commitment to global peace, nonviolence, human rights and environmental protection and sustainability.
4. Urges swift enactment of the Tibetan Policy and Support Act, which the House overwhelmingly passed in January. Directly challenging China's claim that it must approve the selection of a new Dalai Lama, the TPSA makes it official US policy that only the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Buddhist community can decide on his succession, with sanctions for any Chinese officials who try to interfere.
5. Stresses the urgency of addressing the climate crisis—including on the Tibetan plateau—and working toward environmental and economic justice and equality.
6. Encourages American journalists, diplomats, officials and ordinary citizens to seek the same level of access to Tibet that Chinese citizens have to the United States. This summer, the State Department implemented the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act, which for the first time denied entry to the United States by the Chinese officials responsible for keeping Americans out of Tibet.
7. Calls on the secretary of state to minimize the impact that the closure of the US consulate in Chengdu might have on the State Department's ability to report on Tibetan communities and offer them support. One possible solution, the resolution says, is to allocate additional resources to other US missions in China.
8. Asserts that it would be beneficial to continue years of bipartisan, bicameral engagement with Tibetan leaders, including engagement between members of Congress and the Dalai Lama.

Quotes from hearing

Reps. Ted Yoho, R-Fla., Michael McCaul, R-Texas, Chris Smith, R-NJ, and Jim McGovern, D-Mass., introduced the resolution late last year.

At this morning's hearing, Yoho said the Dalai Lama "has done much to promote peace and understanding and to further strengthen US-Tibet relationships."

Decrying Tibetans' "harsh and oppressive treatment at the hands of the Chinese Communist Party," Yoho mentioned a new report from scholar Adrian Zenz exposing a coercive labor program in Tibet.

"We must not let the fate of the Tibetan people mirror that of the people of Xinjiang," Yoho said, referring to the region where the Chinese government has detained more than 1 million Uyghurs and members of other Muslim groups. "Congress stands united here today in support of the Tibet struggle for autonomy, freedom and religious freedom."

Rep. Gerry Connolly, D-Va., commended Yoho for introducing the resolution.

Noting that he led the first Congressional staff delegation to Tibet in 1986, Connolly mentioned that he also met with the Dalai Lama in his exile home of Dharamsala, India last year.

"[I] was really struck with the spirit of peaceful reconciliation with which he still tries to approach his Chinese adversaries," Connolly said. "It's very admirable."

International Campaign for Tibet

International Campaign for Tibet President Matteo Mecacci said, "The committee's approval of House Resolution 697 is another sign of increasing Congressional action on Tibet.

"Although the US government has long supported the Tibetan people, there has been a flurry of bipartisan activity in recent years, from the enactment of the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act in 2018 to the passage of the Tibetan Policy and Support Act in the House earlier this year.

"It's clear that our elected leaders care about the rights of the Tibetan people, and that they value the wisdom of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, which is needed now more than ever during these tumultuous times for our world."



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