



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Senate bill advances Tibet-China conflict resolution

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The Senate introduction today of the Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Conflict Act is a step forward in advancing the US' interest in peacefully resolving China's occupation of Tibet and pressures the Chinese government to resume negotiations with the Dalai Lama's envoys.

Sens. Jeff Merkley, D-Ore., Todd Young, R-Ind., and Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., introduced the bill today, Dec. 20, 2022. The legislation is a companion to the [House version introduced in July](#) by Reps. Jim McGovern, D-Mass., and Michael McCaul, R-Texas.

The [dialogue process between Chinese and Tibetan leaders](#) has been stalled since 2010 while the situation in Tibet continues to deteriorate. This bipartisan legislation represents Congress' intent in making it official US policy that a resumption of dialogue is needed as the conflict between Tibet and China is unresolved and Tibet's legal status remains to be determined under international law.

The bill also recognizes Tibetans' right to self-determination and faults the Chinese government for violating that right.

The Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Conflict Act adds to a recent surge in US support for Tibet, including several new laws passed in the last few years, sanctions on Chinese officials who have violated Tibetan human rights, and statements by President Biden and his administration calling on China to resume direct dialogue toward guaranteeing [meaningful autonomy for the Tibetan people](#).

China has [illegally occupied Tibet for over 60 years](#), forcing the Dalai Lama into exile in 1959.

As a result of China's [extreme human rights abuses](#), Tibet is now the [least-free country on Earth](#) alongside South Sudan and Syria, according to the watchdog group Freedom House.

Quotes

Sen. Jeff Merkley said: "America's values supporting freedom and self-determination for all people must be at the center of all of our actions and relationships around the world—especially as the Chinese government pushes an alternative vision. This legislation makes clear that the United States views the Tibet-China conflict as unresolved and that the people of Tibet deserve a say in how they are governed. It sends a clear message to the People's Republic of China: we expect meaningful negotiations over Tibet's status and do not view current Chinese government actions as meeting those expectations."

Sen. Todd Young said: "The Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) aggression towards Tibet is self-serving, with negotiations on the CCP's terms. We must refresh U.S. policy towards Tibet,

and push for negotiations that advance freedoms for the Tibetan people and peaceful resolution to the CCP's conflict with the Dalai Lama. This bill demonstrates America's resolve that the CCP's status quo – both in Tibet and elsewhere – is not acceptable.”

Sen. Patrick Leahy said: “The Tibetan people, who have sought nothing more than good faith negotiations to resolve Tibet’s political status, have long been subjected to brutal persecution and their culture relentlessly attacked by the Chinese Government. This bill reaffirms that Tibet has never been part of China, and that U.S. support for the right of the Tibetan people to self-determination is unwavering.”

Penpa Tsering, the (Sikyong) President of the Central Tibetan Administration, which provides democratic governance for Tibetans in exile, said: “China’s rule in Tibet lacks historical support, it lacks popular support, and it lacks diplomatic support. Why is China asking nations to say that Tibet is part of the PRC [People’s Republic of China]? It is because China lacks legitimacy over Tibet. Tibetans simply want the same right to self-determination that all people deserve. We have suffered enormous abuse from the Chinese government over many decades, yet we have always sought to settle our differences through peaceful dialogue. This bill would allow the United States to back its consistent calls for dialogue with more force and urgency while helping give Tibetans a voice in their own country. We thank Senators Leahy, Merkley, and Young for introducing the Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Conflict Act, which builds on the incredible bipartisan support the United States has always shown for our just cause.”

The International Campaign for Tibet, an advocacy group based in Washington, DC and Europe that promotes human rights and democratic freedoms for the Tibetan people, said: “The fact that this bill has now been introduced on a bipartisan, bicameral basis demonstrates the American people’s broad support for His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan cause. The people of the United States want justice and human rights in Tibet, and the Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Conflict Act is a vital step toward achieving that goal through peaceful dialogue between the two sides. ICT thanks Sens. Merkley, Young and Leahy for their leadership in introducing the bill today, and we look forward to working with them to make this bill law.”

What the bill does

Known as the Resolve Tibet Act, the new legislation will:

- Make it official US policy that the conflict between Tibet and China is unresolved and Tibet’s legal status remains to be determined under international law
- Recognize that Tibetans have a right to self-determination—and that China’s policies preclude them from exercising that right
- Fault China for failing to meet expectations of participating in dialogue with the Dalai Lama or his representatives
- Reject as “[historically false](#)” China’s claim that Tibet has been part of China since ancient times
- Empower the Office of the Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues to counter Communist Party propaganda about the history of Tibet, the Tibetan people and Tibetan institutions, including [His Holiness the Dalai Lama](#)
- Make clear that Tibet includes not only the so-called “Tibet Autonomous Region” of China but also Tibetan areas of Gansu, Sichuan, Qinghai and Yunnan provinces

[Read the Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Conflict Act.](#)

US support for Tibet

For decades, Congress and administrations of both parties have offered [consistent, bipartisan US support for the Tibetan people](#).

The Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Conflict Act builds on recent momentum in US action on Tibet.

During the 2020 presidential campaign, [then-candidate Joe Biden promised](#) to “work with our allies in pressing Beijing to return to direct dialogue with the representatives of the Tibetan people to achieve meaningful autonomy, respect for human rights, and the preservation of Tibet’s environment as well as its unique cultural, linguistic and religious traditions.”

In December 2021, Uzra Zeya, the Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy and Human Rights, [was appointed to the role of Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues in the State Department](#).

Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken said in a May 2022 [speech on the Biden administration’s approach to China](#) that the rules-based international order’s “founding documents include the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which enshrined concepts like self-determination, sovereignty, the peaceful settlement of disputes. These are not Western constructs. They are reflections of the world’s shared aspirations.”

Just this month, the Biden administration announced [Treasury Department sanctions on two Chinese officials](#) for committing “serious human rights abuse” against the Tibetan people.

Recent US laws on Tibet

In recent years, the US has also passed several laws on Tibet.

The [Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act of 2018](#) led the State Department to [ban Chinese officials from entering the United States](#) over their role in keeping American citizens, including journalists and diplomats, out of Tibet.

The [Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020](#) dramatically upgraded US support for the Tibetan people and made it official American policy that only the Dalai Lama and the [Tibetan Buddhist community](#) can decide on his succession, with the US committing to sanction any Chinese officials who try to interfere in that process.

Need for dialogue

Under pressure from the international community, China has held dialogue in the past with the representatives of the Dalai Lama. Ten rounds of dialogue took place from 2002-10.

But the dialogue process has been dormant ever since, with China making absurd demands that the Dalai Lama declare that Tibet has always been part of China, despite abundant historical evidence disproving China’s lies.

China has also successfully pressured other countries to accept its claims over Tibet. But with the Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Conflict Act, the US will make it clear that Tibet’s status is

not resolved and put pressure on the Chinese government to return to the negotiating table to reach a lasting agreement on Tibet's future.

[Learn more about the Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Conflict Act.](#)



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