



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

At start of Congressional session, Tibet-China legislation reintroduced

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As the legislative year begins, Congress is already demonstrating its bipartisan commitment to resolving China's illegal occupation of Tibet by reintroducing a bill pressuring Beijing to resume dialogue with the Dalai Lama's envoys.

Rep. Jim McGovern, D-Mass., Rep. Michael McCaul, R-Texas, Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Ore., and Sen. Todd Young, R-Ind., announced the reintroduction of the Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Conflict Act today, Feb. 8, 2023. The legislation was previously introduced in the House on July 13, 2022 and in the Senate on Dec. 20 of last year.

The announcement comes as Penpa Tsering, the Sikyong (President) of the Central Tibetan Administration, which provides democratic governance for Tibetans in exile, is visiting Washington to meet with US lawmakers—including the main sponsors of the legislation—and Biden administration officials.

Known as the Resolve Tibet Act, the bill will make it official US policy that China must resume dialogue with the envoys of the Dalai Lama, as the conflict between Tibet and China is unresolved and Tibet's legal status remains to be determined under international law. The two sides held 10 rounds of dialogue between 2002-2010, but since then, the dialogue process has remained stalled.

China has illegally occupied Tibet for over 60 years, forcing the Dalai Lama into exile in 1959. As a result of the Chinese government's decades of 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.

The Resolve Tibet Act offers new hope that the decades-long crisis in Tibet can come to a peaceful end.

What the bill does

The Resolve Tibet Act 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 that are incorporated into Gansu, Sichuan, Qinghai and Yunnan provinces

The bill is part of a series in US lawmaking on Tibet in recent years, joining the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act of 2018—which pushed China to allow US journalists, diplomats and ordinary citizens to visit Tibet—and the Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020, which dramatically upgraded US support for Tibet, including by asserting that China does not have the authority to interfere in the succession of the Dalai Lama.

Quotes

Rep. Jim McGovern said in a statement today: “The Tibetans are a people who deserve to have their rights respected under international law. This includes the right of self-determination, which they have been denied by the Chinese government and the international community. The Biden Administration has been vocal about Ukrainians’ rights to decide how they are governed, and the Tibetan people are no less entitled to this right under founding UN covenants. Our bipartisan bill can help incentivize the two sides to negotiate a durable solution.”

McGovern also spoke about the bill during a public reception in his honor, hosted in New York City on Jan. 29 by The Tibetan Community of New York & New Jersey. McGovern told the Tibetan Americans in the crowd: “You all know what’s going on right now. The Chinese government wants to wear you down. They want to wear the friends of Tibet down. They believe that our attention span in the United States is short. That we’re not in it for the long run. But what we’re proving is that they’re wrong. We’re proving that not only are they wrong, but that people care deeply about the Tibetan community and all the values that you stand for. It needs to be highlighted here that the most legislation ever passed in Congress on Tibet has occurred during these last four years. This has been an incredible legislative string of victories for the Tibetan community. And we’re not done. That’s why this bill ... is so incredibly important.”

Rep. Michael McCaul said: “The Chinese Communist Party continues to oppress the Tibetan people. Tibetans are subject to the CCP’s mass surveillance and censorship tactics and are arbitrarily killed or imprisoned for expressing their desire for freedom. I am proud to introduce this bipartisan bill to reject the CCP’s claims that their tyranny over Tibet is legitimate and will assert the Tibetan people have a say in their own future.”

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,” said Senator Merkley. “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 and even the very definition of Tibet 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. Putting this bill forward again demonstrates America’s resolve that the CCP’s status quo – both in Tibet and elsewhere – is not acceptable.”

The International Campaign for Tibet, an advocacy group that promotes human rights and democratic freedoms for the Tibetan people, said: “For decades, the American people have shown broad, bipartisan support for the cause of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the people of Tibet. The reintroduction of the Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Conflict Act in the first month of the legislative calendar shows that resolving the Tibetan issue remains a priority for Americans’ elected leaders in both parties and chambers of Congress.

“ICT thanks Rep. McGovern, Rep. McCaul, Sen. Merkley and Sen. Young for their vision in moving forward this innovative and important piece of legislation. Our members across the country look forward to working with them and their peers in Congress to make the Resolve Tibet Act law.”



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