



## INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

### House committee approves Tibet-China dispute bill

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A bill to strengthen US efforts in pushing China to negotiate with the Dalai Lama's envoys to resolve the longstanding Tibet-China dispute can now proceed to the House floor after an important committee vote today.

With several Tibetan Americans in attendance, the House Foreign Affairs Committee voted unanimously at a markup hearing today, Nov. 29, 2023, to approve the bipartisan Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act, known as the Resolve Tibet Act.

The bill—an amended House version of [legislation introduced last year](#) by Reps. Jim McGovern, D-Mass., and Michael McCaul, R-Texas, as well as Sens. Jeff Merkley, D-Ore., and Todd Young, R-Ind.—will pressure the Chinese government to resume negotiations with the Dalai Lama's envoys or the democratically elected leaders of the Tibetan people. The dialogue process has been stalled since 2010.

The bill will also dismiss as inaccurate the Chinese claim that Tibet has been part of China since antiquity, and it will empower the State Department to actively counter China's disinformation about Tibetan history, people and institutions.

The approval of the bill comes just days after President Joe Biden met Chinese leader Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in San Francisco, where the White House says Biden [raised concerns about China's human rights abuses in Tibet](#).

#### Quotes from committee members, ICT

Committee Chairman Rep. Michael McCaul, R-Texas, one of the main sponsors of the bill, said: “First of all, I want to thank those who have attended that represent the great Tibetan people, the nation that’s been oppressed for so many years by the Chinese Communist Party. We welcome you, and we’re so glad that we’ve come to this great day where this committee will pass and move out of this committee this Tibetan resolution that will go to the House floor, pass, and I predict will pass the Senate and be signed into law.”

Rep. Jim McGovern, D-Mass., another main sponsor of the bill, said in a statement: “I am proud to lead this bill and I’m proud it was marked up this week. Under international law, Tibetans are a people who have the right to determine their own destiny. Also under international law, there is a right to truth. The truth is that Tibet has not always been part of China, as the Chinese government claims. My bill requires the State Department to counter the PRC’s disinformation about Tibet, its history and its institutions, including that of the Dalai Lama. Rather than lie about the history of Tibet, I call on the

Chinese Government to restart dialogue with the Dalai Lama to resolve the long-standing dispute between Tibet and China and respect the aspirations of the Tibetan people.”

Ranking Member Rep. Gregory Meeks, D-N.Y., said: “I support this bill that Rep. Jim McGovern and Chairman McCaul have put forward because for far too long, Beijing has repressed the Tibetan people and shirked its commitments to work with the Dalai Lama and his representatives to resolve the Tibet question through dialogue. I am deeply concerned by the ongoing effort by Beijing to dilute the distinct religious, cultural, linguistic and historical identity of the Tibetan people ... This is an important and very timely measure.”

Rep. Chris Smith, R-N.J., the chair of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, said: “This bill authorizes the State Department to take actions to counter Chinese Communist propaganda directed against Tibet, including about Tibet’s history and institutions, and for that reason alone it should be supported. But during a month when the atheist Communist Party claims that the Dalai Lama cannot recognize a successor without their approval, this bill is timely and sends the right message that this Congress stands with the Tibetan people and their struggle for freedom and fundamental human rights.”

Rep. Gerry Connolly, D-Va., said: “A few years ago I had the privilege of meeting with the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala [in northern India] and to see the conditions the Tibetan leadership is sort of forced to live with in exile because the Han forcibly moved them out. Tibet is a distinct culture, it has a distinct identity ... I think this bill is an important statement by the Congress, and I’m so pleased to want to vote for it.”

Rep. Scott Perry, R-Pa., said: “Miracles never cease. Me and Chairman McGovern on the same side of an issue. It’s awesome when that bipartisanship can happen.”

Rep. Joe Wilson, R-S.C., said: “The Dalai Lama has pushed for peace since the 1950 illegal invasion of the sovereign nation of Tibet by dictator Mao Zedong ... China has continued their cultural genocide, announcing Tibet does not exist and pushing for the false name of ‘Xizang.’ I agree very much with my colleague Congressman Scott Perry that this should be the beginning of passage of legislation to stand up for the people of Tibet and stand against the Chinese Communist Party genocide in Tibet.”

International Campaign for Tibet President Tencho Gyatso said: *“Today the House Foreign Affairs Committee took a major step toward advancing the Resolve Tibet Act and rekindling the hopes of the people of Tibet for stronger international support of the Dalai Lama’s efforts toward a peaceful resolution of the Tibet-China conflict.*

*“With this legislation, the US government will make it clear that the Tibet-China conflict must be resolved through dialogue and that the US will continue to make this a focus in accordance with international law. ICT thanks the committee members who approved the bill today, as well as the members of Congress who introduced it. We look forward to further support from Congressional leaders toward speedy passage of the Resolve Tibet Act into law.”*

## **What the bill does**

The Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act states that it is US policy that the dispute between Tibet and China must be resolved in accordance with international law, including the UN Charter, by peaceful means through dialogue without preconditions.

The legislation adds that the US should:

- Promote substantive dialogue without preconditions between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama or his representatives or the democratically elected leaders of the Tibetan community. The US could also explore activities to improve prospects for dialogue leading to a negotiated agreement on Tibet.
- Coordinate with other governments in multilateral efforts toward the goal of a negotiated agreement on Tibet.
- Encourage China's government to address the aspirations of the Tibetan people regarding their distinct historical, cultural, religious and linguistic identity.

## **Tibet's history and status**

The Resolve Tibet Act also counters Chinese propaganda by laying out the truth of Tibet's history and status.

Currently, [Tibet ranks as the least-free country on Earth](#) alongside South Sudan and Syria, according to watchdog group Freedom House.

Among the most shocking of China's ongoing human rights violations in Tibet are its [mass collection of DNA from about 1 million Tibetans](#) and its [separation of over 1 million Tibetan children from their families](#) at state-run boarding schools as part of a widespread effort to eliminate Tibet's unique culture, language and religion.

According to the Resolve Tibet Act, China's policies are "systematically suppressing the ability of the Tibetan people to preserve their religion, culture, language, history, way of life and environment."

China often rejects the international community's support for Tibet by labeling Tibet as an internal matter and claiming that Tibet has been part of China since ancient times. However, the legislation dismisses that claim as "historically inaccurate."

The Resolve Tibet Act states that Tibetans "are a people with a distinct religious, cultural, linguistic and historical identity."

## **Fighting China's disinformation**

The bill says US public diplomacy efforts should "counter disinformation about Tibet" from the Chinese government and Communist Party, including "disinformation about the history of Tibet, the Tibetan people, and Tibetan institutions including that of the Dalai Lama."

The bill adds that the US special coordinator for Tibetan issues in the State Department should work to ensure that US government statements and documents counter disinformation about Tibet.

It also makes funds available under the Asia Reassurance Initiative Act of 2018 to combat China's disinformation.

In addition, the bill calls on the Chinese government to “cease its propagation of disinformation about the history of Tibet, the Tibetan people, and Tibetan institutions, including that of the Dalai Lama.”

The bill also takes aim at China’s attempts to redraw the borders of Tibet.

Although the Chinese government tries to claim that Tibet is only the Tibet Autonomous Region—an administrative region of China that spans only about half the Tibetan homeland—the legislation makes clear that Tibet also includes Tibetan regions of Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan and Yunnan provinces.

## **Growing US support for Tibet**

The committee’s approval of the Resolve Tibet Act adds to a historic period of US support for Tibet.

- In 2018, the US [enacted the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act](#), a bipartisan piece of legislation that took aim at China’s unfair policy of keeping US journalists, diplomats and ordinary citizens out of Tibet even though their Chinese counterparts can travel freely throughout the United States. Under this law, the State Department has [banned Chinese officials from entering the country](#) over their role in keeping Americans out of Tibet.
- Two years later, the [Tibetan Policy and Support Act became law](#), dramatically expanding US support for the Tibetan people. Among its many provisions, the legislation made it official US policy that only the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Buddhist community can decide on his succession—and that any attempt by Chinese officials to interfere in that process will result in sanctions.
- In 2021, Secretary of State Antony Blinken appointed Under Secretary of State Uzra Zeya as the [new US special coordinator for Tibetan issues](#).
- Last year, the [Treasury Department sanctioned two Chinese officials](#) involved in “serious human rights abuse” in the Tibet Autonomous Region.
- Earlier in 2023, [Blinken announced sanctions on Chinese officials](#) for their “forcible assimilation of more than one million Tibetan children in government-run boarding schools.”
- Blinken also said this year that he was [concerned by “reports of the spread of mass DNA collection](#) to Tibet.”

## **Need to resume dialogue**

During his 2020 campaign, President Biden [pledged that his administration would “stand up for the people of Tibet,”](#) including by “work[ing] 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.”

The Resolve Tibet Act will provide another tool for the Biden administration and the US government to push for renewed dialogue.

As the legislation notes, Tibetan and Chinese officials [sat for several rounds of dialogue between 2002 and 2010](#). However, since then, China has refused to negotiate.

The Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration have continued to be committed to [resolving the Tibet-China conflict through the Middle Way Approach](#).

The Resolve Tibet Act faults the Chinese government for “failing to meet the expectations of the United States to engage in meaningful dialogue with the Dalai Lama or his representatives or to reach a negotiated resolution that addresses the aspirations of the Tibetan people.”



International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) | 1825 Jefferson Place NW | Washington, DC 20036 | United States of America  
Phone: (202) 785-1515 | Fax: (202) 785-4343 | [info@savetibet.org](mailto:info@savetibet.org)

ICT Europe  
Funenpark 1D | 1018 AK  
Amsterdam, The Netherlands  
Phone: +31 (0)20 3308265  
Fax: +31 (0)20 3308266  
[icteurope@savetibet.nl](mailto:icteurope@savetibet.nl)

ICT Deutschland e.V.  
Schönhauser Allee 163 | 10435  
Berlin, Germany  
Phone: +49 (0)30 27879086  
Fax: +49 (0)30 27879087  
[info@savetibet.de](mailto:info@savetibet.de)

ICT Brussels  
11, rue de la linière | 1060  
Brussels, Belgium  
Phone: +32 (0)2 609 44 10  
Fax: +32 (0)2 609 44 32  
[info@savetibet.eu](mailto:info@savetibet.eu)