

U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20522

Dear Riley M Barnes:

We congratulate you on your appointment as the U.S. State Department Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues. This position has long reflected bipartisan and unwavering U.S. support for the Tibetan people's ongoing struggle for human rights and democratic freedoms—consistent with American values, universal human rights standards, and protecting U.S. interests from the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) influence. As you assume the duties of the Special Coordinator, we respectfully offer to work with you to advance U.S. policy on Tibet under the Tibetan Policy Act (P.L.107-228), Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act (P.L.115-330), Tibetan Policy and Support Act (TPSA) (P.L.116-260), and Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act (P.L.118-70).

Implementation of Existing Laws

Dialogue resumption. The Tibetan Policy Act of 2002 promotes dialogue between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and representatives of the Dalai Lama or Central Tibetan Administration (CTA). High-level public advocacy, including by the President and Secretary of State, was essential in facilitating nine formal rounds of dialogue from 2002 to 2010, and we encourage you to continue the work to engage earnestly with the CTA, like-minded partners, and experts to resume talks. We also request that you ensure the timely public release of the annual Tibet Negotiations Report.

Access to Tibet. The Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act of 2018 is intended to pressure PRC officials to end discrimination against travel to Tibet, yet restrictions persist. We urge you to use the tools and sanctions authorities provided under this Act to achieve its intended goal. We further ask that the Department make robust efforts to publicize sanctioned individuals' names and communicate that sanctions will remain until restrictions are lifted.

The Dalai Lama's succession. The Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020, introduced by then-Senator Marco Rubio and signed into law by President Trump, clarified that decisions involving the next Dalai Lama are exclusively spiritual matters belonging solely to him, the Tibetan Buddhist faith community, and the Tibetan people. We urge you to reaffirm this policy at the highest levels and coordinate with other governments to develop a unified stance. In anticipation of the anxiety and instability resulting from the death of the current Dalai Lama, we also

encourage the use of Global Magnitsky sanctions and other accountability tools to deter CCP interference.

Countering disinformation. The Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act of 2024 clarifies U.S. policy and the Special Coordinator’s role in countering CCP disinformation on Tibet’s history, the Tibetan people, institutions, and the Dalai Lama. We urge the Department to devote robust resources to implementing this Act.

Strengthening Tibetan communities

Programmatic support for Tibetans. As authorized by the Tibetan Support Act of 2020 and as funded by annual appropriations bills going back to the 1990s, the U.S. government has provided consistent support to Tibetan communities, including Tibetans in exile and inside Tibet. These efforts provide tangible resources that empower the Tibetan people’s quest for meaningful autonomy, human rights, and cultural preservation while also playing an important role in countering the CCP’s propaganda and malign influence in the region. Fiscal Year 2026 appropriations maintain these funding levels, and we look forward to the State Department’s swift implementation of these funds to promote cultural preservation and other support for Tibetan communities in Tibet; economic development, health care, food assistance, and education in Tibetan exile communities in South Asia; and capacity building support to the Central Tibetan Administration.

Tibetans in Nepal. Thousands of Tibetan refugees who reside in Nepal without legal status and without a viable path to acquire such status continue to suffer from the PRC’s malign influence. The recent change of government in Nepal offers an opportunity for the Nepali government to address the long-running obstacles regarding registration and resettlement. We ask you to prioritize a solution for these Tibetans in Nepal.

Engagement with the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA). The Tibetan people have made the remarkable and rare achievement of establishing genuinely democratic institutions of self-governance in an exile and refugee context. This achievement comes in stark contrast to what Tibetans in Tibet experience under repressive CCP rule. Congress has declared that “Tibet’s true representatives are the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government in exile as recognized by the Tibetan people,” and we urge continued tangible support for the development of Tibetan democracy.

In tandem with this dynamic, engagement between officials of the U.S. government and the CTA has deepened over the years. We strongly urge you to continue and expand this engagement and to work toward a mutually beneficial meeting between the Sikyong and the Secretary of State.

Countering PRC influence

Support Tibetan broadcasting services. For decades, Radio Free Asia and Voice of America have provided some of the only sources of independent information into Tibet as an alternative to CCP-run state media. Their broadcasts also provide news and critical information about what is happening inside Tibet to Tibetan communities in exile and to policymakers, including in the Department and Congress. We ask that you make the case within the U.S. government for the restoration and continued operation of these critical independent broadcasting services.

We know what is possible when the Administration and Congress work together to promote America's interests regarding Tibet. We look forward to working with you as Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues to implement these laws and appropriations provided by Congress, to advance a renewed and reinvigorated push to peacefully resolve the dispute over Tibet's future, and to continue the U.S. government's unwavering support for our Tibetan allies.

We are ready to support any such effort.

Sincerely,