

CONGRESS AND TIBET

Three decades of policy and programmatic support



1987: First address, The Dalai Lama speaks at the Congressional Human Rights Caucus



June 2017: The Dalai Lama at a luncheon hosted by Speaker Paul Ryan(R) and Leader Nancy Pelosi(D).

The U.S. Congress has been the vanguard of the Tibet issue for almost three decades. Since it became the first parliamentary body to welcome His Holiness the Dalai Lama in 1987, Congress has identified Tibet as a problem that must be addressed and can be solved.

Fundamentally, **the Tibet issue is about the inability of Tibetans, under Chinese rule, to control their own future, practice their religion freely, or have a say in their economic development.** The Dalai Lama is seeking autonomy for the Tibetan people within the People's Republic of China. Administrations of both parties, and Congress, have long supported dialogue between the Dalai Lama's representatives and the Chinese government toward a solution for Tibet. The U.S. has repeatedly called on Chinese authorities to respect the basic human rights and religious freedoms of the Tibetan people.

WHY TIBET?

Congress has identified China's repressive policies towards Tibet as a serious problem that must be addressed, and has consistently supported the efforts of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to realize genuine autonomy for Tibet, and for the protection of fundamental human rights in his homeland.

Congressional support dates back to 1987, when Congress provided the Dalai Lama with the opportunity to present his Five Point Peace Plan for Tibet. In 2007, Congress awarded the Dalai Lama the Congressional Gold Medal in recognition of, among other things, his promotion of democracy and freedom for the Tibetan people, and his contributions to global religious understanding, human rights, and ecology. In 2015, both the House and the Senate passed unanimous resolutions (H.Res.337, S.Res.200) honoring the Dalai Lama on his 80th birthday and noting his efforts to preserve the cultural and religious identity and heritage of the Tibetan people, and to promote nonviolence and greater tolerance globally.

THE CURRENT SITUATION IN TIBET

The key issue facing the six million Tibetans in Tibet is that they are not able to enjoy fundamental human rights or democratic freedoms. They cannot practice their religion freely, and China vilifies their spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama. Tibetans are routinely detained and disappeared for expressing their devotion to him.

In its 2016 congressionally mandated Tibet Negotiations Report, the State Department, said: "We continue to urge China to address policies in Tibetan areas that have created tensions; respect and preserve the distinct religious, linguistic, and cultural identity of the Tibetan people; permit Tibetans to express their grievances freely, publicly, peacefully, and without fear of retribution; allow journalists, diplomats, and other observers unrestricted access to Tibetan areas"

Freedom House, in its 2017 Freedom of the World Report, has ranked Tibet as the least free territory among the countries and territories surveyed, in terms of Freedom Rating, Political Rights and Civil Liberties. Human rights

organizations, such as the International Campaign for Tibet, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International, continue to document egregious human rights abuses committed by Chinese officials in Tibet.

WHAT IS THE DALAI LAMA SEEKING?

The Dalai Lama and Tibetan leadership are seeking genuine autonomy for the Tibetan people within the People's Republic of China through a Middle Way Approach.

WHAT IS THE U.S. GOVERNMENT'S POSITION?

The Tibetan Policy Act of 2002 institutionalizes U.S. policy with respect to Tibet, and provides the framework for Tibet-related programs and initiatives, which support the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan people's quest for human rights and dignity. Congress has consistently provided funding to support economic development, cultural preservation, health, and education programs in Tibet and for Tibetans in exile.

Administrations of both parties, and Congress, have supported dialogue between the Dalai Lama's representatives and the Chinese government toward a solution for Tibet. The U.S. supports the preservation of the distinct Tibetan culture, language and religion, and has repeatedly called on Chinese authorities to respect the basic human rights and freedoms of the Tibetan people.

WHAT HAS CONGRESS DONE SPECIFICALLY FOR TIBET?

Through its annual appropriations process, Congress has provided support for:

- economic development for Tibetan communities
- humanitarian assistance for refugees
- the Office of the Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues with the State Department
- National Endowment for Democracy Tibet programs
- Tibetan language broadcasts of Voice of America/Radio Free Asia
- Scholarships for Tibetan students
- Ngawang Choephel exchange program

Congress has passed numerous resolutions supporting the Dalai Lama's initiatives, condemning human rights abuses against Tibetans, seeking the release of Tibetan political prisoners, and supporting dialogue toward a negotiated agreement.



June 2017: The Dalai Lama, Sikyong Lobsang Sangay & Representative Penpa Tsering with members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.



Nov, 2016: Leader Pelosi and Members of the Congressional Delegation in front of the Potala Palace in Lhasa during their historic visit to Tibet.