



## H. Res: .... Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act of 2017 (H.R. -----)

**THE ASK:** Please consider becoming an original cosponsor. The bill will be introduced by the end of the week.

### **BACKGROUND:**

Congressmen Jim McGovern (D) and Joe Pitts (R) first introduced this legislation in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress in 2014 and reintroduced in the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress in 2015. The legislation had 43 cosponsors at the end of 2016 in the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress.

**THE ISSUE:** Access of U.S. citizens to Tibetan areas of the People's Republic of China is severely restricted and tightly controlled, more so than any other region of China. In order to travel to Tibet, foreigners not only need a visa to China but additional travel permits, which is rarely given to independent observers.

**PURPOSE:** To promote the freedom to travel by U.S. diplomats, journalists and citizens in Tibetan areas of the P.R.C.

### **WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?**

Among other reasons:

- **Reciprocity and fairness:** Chinese citizens traveling to the U.S. have unimpeded access to all of the U.S. The PRC government should give U.S. diplomats, journalists, NGOs and other citizens the same access in China, including Tibetan areas.
- **Protection of U.S. citizens/consular services:** U.S. consular officers need unimpeded access to Tibet in order to assist U.S. citizens. For example, in October 2013, U.S. consular officers were hindered in their ability to serve Americans injured in a bus accident in Tibet.
- **Free flow of information, protection of human rights.** The American people continue to have a strong interest in Tibet and the Tibetan people. Journalists, diplomats, NGOs, and Members of Congress should have similar access to Tibetan areas as they do for other parts of the P.R.C. so that they can be informed and report from the ground on all aspects of the Tibetan issue -- including human rights, the environment, and other developments that are critical to our understanding of this geopolitically strategic region.
- **Implements goals and spirit of the Tibetan Policy Act of 2002.**

**WHAT THIS DOES:** Bans Chinese officials who design and implement China's policy on access to Tibet from coming to the U.S. (through a visa ban) until the Tibetan areas are made equally accessible to U.S. citizens as other parts of China.