

FACT SHEET: THREE DECADES OF POLICY AND PROGRAMMATIC SUPPORT



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



2015: Speaker Pelosi and members of the Congressional Delegation in front of the Potala Palace in Lhasa during their historic visit to Tibet.

U.S. CONGRESS AND TIBET

The U.S. Congress has been the vanguard of support for 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 crisis that must be addressed and can be solved. Fundamentally, the Tibet issue is about the inability of Tibetans, under Chinese rule, to determine 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 2002, the Congress passed the Tibetan Policy Act of 2002 institutionalizing U.S. policy with respect to Tibet, and provides the framework for Tibet-related programs and initiatives.

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.

In 2018 Senate passed S.Res.429 that recognizes March 10, 2018, as Tibetan Rights Day and calls on the Department of State to fully implement the provisions of the Tibetan Policy Act of 2002. Congress passed the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act in December 2018 and was signed into Law by the President on December 18, 2018. The act calls for Americans to have equal right of access to Tibet just as Chinese citizens have to the United States.

In January 2020, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 4331 the Tibetan Policy & Support Act. The Bill updates the Tibetan Policy Act of 2002 and expresses its sense that the identification and installation of Tibetan Buddhist religious leaders, including a future 15th Dalai Lama, is a matter that should be determined solely within the Tibetan Buddhist faith community, in accordance with the inalienable right to religious freedom. A Senate version is pending passage.

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.

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WHAT HAS CONGRESS DONE SPECIFICALLY FOR TIBET? Congress has passed numerous resolutions supporting the Dalai Lama's initiatives, condemning human rights abuses against Tibetans, seeking the release of Tibetan political prisoners, supporting dialogue toward a negotiated agreement, and, most recently, seeking to end China's enforced isolation of Tibet. And 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

What can you do:

SUPPORT FUNDING OF TIBET-RELATED PROGRAMS IN THE FOREIGN OPERATIONS APPROPRIATIONS BILL FOR 2021 AT SAME LEVEL INDICATED IN 2020. *These are indispensable investments that help empower Tibetans both in exile and inside Tibet to pursue the preservation and promotion of their distinct religious and cultural heritage during these difficult times.*

Please contact the International Campaign for Tibet for details. www.savetibet.org