



TIBET LOBBY DAY

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US Congress and Tibet Three Decades of Support for Human Rights in Tibet



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



2024: Rep. Jim McGovern, D-Mass. speaks on the House floor in support of H.R.533.

The US Congress has been the international vanguard of support for Tibet for almost three decades. In 1987 Congress became the first parliamentary body to welcome His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Congress has recognized the situation in Tibet as a humanitarian crisis and strategic concern that *can* and *must* be resolved.

Fundamentally, the Tibet crisis is the inability of Tibetans, under the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regime's more than 60-year occupation, to determine their own political future, practice their religion freely, or have a say in their economic development.

MOST RECENT ACTION

The Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act (H.R.533/S.138) passed the House of Representatives with overwhelming bipartisan support, continuing the long tradition of United States' unified support for the Tibetan people. The bill takes concrete action to resolve China's decades-long illegal occupation of Tibet by clarifying that the U.S. position is that the Tibet-China dispute remains unresolved and must be according to international law. It also faults China for refusing to enter resume negotiations. It also refutes China's persistent claim that Tibet has been part of China since "ancient times" as inaccurate. Finally, it mandates that the State Department take active action to combat Chinese government disinformation regarding Tibet. Reps. Jim McGovern (D-MA) and Michael McCaul (R-TX) introduced the bill in the House as did Senators Jeff Merkley (D-OR) and Todd Young (R-IN) in the Senate.

Below is additional information on the long the Tibetan people's aspirations and the United State's long history of support.

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 that embraces dialogue and respect for all people.

WHAT IS THE US GOVERNMENT'S POSITION?

Congress has identified China's repressive policies towards Tibet as a serious problem that must be confronted. Administrations of both parties, and Congress, have long supported the Dalai Lama's call for meaningful negotiation to end the oppression of Tibet and has repeatedly urged Chinese authorities to respect the fundamental human rights and religious freedoms of the Tibetan people.

US official policy with respect to Tibet has been codified in multiple laws which support the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan people's quest for human rights and dignity.

Congress also 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, seeking to end China's enforced isolation of Tibet. Congress has consistently provided funding through the annual appropriations process to support economic development, cultural preservation, health, and education programs in Tibet and for Tibetans in exile.

Examples include:

- economic development for Tibetan communities
- humanitarian assistance for refugees
- Promoting Democracy and Religious Freedom
- 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 from the Indian subcontinent
- Exchange program for Tibetan scholars from Tibet

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Encourage Senators to co-sponsor the Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act (H.R. 533/S.138) and deliver it quickly to President Biden's desk.

- Encourage the State Department to fully implement the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act and the Tibetan Policy and Support Act.
- Ensure specific provisions to support the Tibetan people and hold China accountable for its crimes against humanity are included in any final comprehensive China-related legislation.
- Advocate for and stand in solidarity with Tibetan political prisoners who have been unjustly imprisoned for years for celebrating the birthday of the Dalai Lama by contacting the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission to adopt a victim as a prisoner of conscience through the ***Defending Freedoms Project***.
- Support funding of Tibet-related programs in the Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill. 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

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Congressional support dates to 1987, when the Congressional Human Rights Caucus 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 US 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.

On December 22, 2020, the Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020 was signed into law. It expresses its sense that the identification and installation of Tibetan Buddhist religious leaders, including a future 15th Dalai Lama, can be determined solely within the Tibetan Buddhist faith community, in accordance with the inalienable right to religious freedom.

