



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

US House passes Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act

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In a major development on the status of Tibet and US-China relations, the US House of Representatives passed the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act on September 25, 2018.

The bipartisan bill promotes access to Tibet for United States officials, journalists, NGOs and citizens. Under the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act, the Chinese officials who deny Americans entry to Tibet will be denied entry to the US.

“Today is a great day for human rights,” said Rep. Jim McGovern (D-Mass), who introduced the legislation alongside Rep. Randy Hultgren (R-Ill.). “The United States must continue to stand squarely for human rights and speak openly against China’s human rights violations in Tibet.”

The bill is expected to help curtail China’s isolation of Tibet, a historically independent nation that China has occupied for nearly 70 years. Chinese authorities have taken measures to restrict access to Tibet for foreign visitors, including preventing journalists from reporting on its human rights abuses, which include religious persecution, torture, false imprisonment and extrajudicial killings.

China nearly always forbids American journalists, diplomats and citizens from accessing Tibet, even though Chinese citizens are free to travel throughout the US. On the rare occasions when US citizens are allowed into Tibet, they can only travel under the constant monitoring of Chinese authorities.

Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.) said the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act is important both for supporting the people of Tibet and for addressing China’s hostility toward the US.

“I have been increasingly worried about the impact of China’s intimidation tactics on US policy toward Tibet but with this bill, we are sending a clear message that we will not let Beijing’s immoral, unjust and destabilizing treatment of the Tibetan people go unaddressed,” Ros-Lehtinen said. “The United States must make Tibet a priority in our relations with Beijing, and I am very pleased we are moving in that direction with this important bill.”

Matteo Mecacci, president of the International Campaign for Tibet, said, “The approval of the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act by the House is an indication of Congress’ continuing concerns about China’s treatment of the Tibetan people. It is a strong statement by the United States that puts pressure on the Chinese government to open up Tibet to the outside world and shows that their propaganda is hollow.”

Tibetan-Americans and Tibet supporters throughout the US have lobbied their members of Congress to pass the bill. Many have showed their support on Twitter and Facebook using #AccessToTibet.

Mecacci said, “Now that the House has passed the bill, we must turn our attention to the Senate passing the Reciprocal Access to Tibet.”

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), who is a cosponsor of the Senate version of the bill (S.821), tweeted: “Glad to see the House taking up the Reciprocal Access to #Tibet bill this week. I introduced the Senate companion and am hopeful we can get this to @POTUS’s desk before the end of the year.”

[Read the full text of the bill »](#)