

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 31, 2013

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232 of the Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204 of the Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Eric Cantor
Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-329 of the Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
Democratic Whip
U.S. House of Representatives
H-148 of the Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Boehner, Majority Leader Cantor, Leader Pelosi, and Democratic Whip Hoyer,

We write to express concern with the timing of H.R.850, the Nuclear Iran Prevention Act of 2013. While some of us have cosponsored this legislation prior to markup by the House Committee on Foreign Affairs on May 22, 2013, we believe voting on this bill at this time and in its current form would be counterproductive to U.S. efforts to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran.

As marked up in Committee, H.R.850 places significant restrictions on the President's authority to waive sanctions in exchange for Iranian concessions. In doing so, the bill threatens to fracture the unprecedented international coalition working to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran and further weakens U.S. diplomatic efforts by constraining the President's authority to utilize sanctions as leverage at the negotiating table. We therefore urge that the President's full waiver authorities that were weakened or removed by amendment adopted in Committee to be reinstated in the bill. This includes restoring the President's national security waiver for sanctions related to weapons of mass destruction or other military capabilities, which was eliminated. We also urge you to restore the President's full authority to temporarily waive oil sanctions for countries that are cooperating with the sanctions -- a critical authority to maintain the unprecedented international coalition working to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran but which was severely limited in Committee by manager's amendment.

Additionally, we urge that this bill make U.S. policy on sanctions crystal clear to ensure the strongest possible diplomatic effort at the negotiating table by including the following language:

"Statement of Policy -- It shall be the policy of the United States to utilize sanctions on Iran as diplomatic leverage in negotiations and to calibrate such sanctions to elicit verifiable concessions from Iran that have a material impact on its ability to develop a nuclear weapon."

Finally, we believe that it would be counterproductive and irresponsible to vote on this measure before Iran's new president is inaugurated on August 4, 2013. A diplomatic solution remains the best possible means for ensuring that Iran does not acquire a nuclear weapon, and the House of Representatives should not preempt a potential opportunity to secure such an outcome with another sanctions bill. While we have no illusions about the nature of Iran's government, Iran's president-elect has sent several positive signals that must not be rejected out of hand. Returning these signals with a vote on more sanctions can only serve to undermine potential forces for moderation in Iran and empower hardliners who were defeated in recent elections.

We want to be very clear: we are not calling for sanctions to be lifted unilaterally. Iran must first agree to take verifiable steps that satisfy international concerns about the nature of its nuclear program and ensure Iran does not acquire a nuclear weapon. However, it is critical that the President's ability to ease sanctions in exchange for Iranian nuclear concessions is fully intact, international unity is not fractured by a new sanctions vote, and new opportunities for diplomatic success are not undermined through preemptive action by Congress.

Lastly, many of us hoped this bill would include language explicitly stating that nothing in the bill grants authorization for war with Iran. The bill as it is currently written is too open to interpretation, and direct language clarifying the lack of war-making authority against Iran needs to be included.

We look forward to discussing these suggestions with you further.

Sincerely,



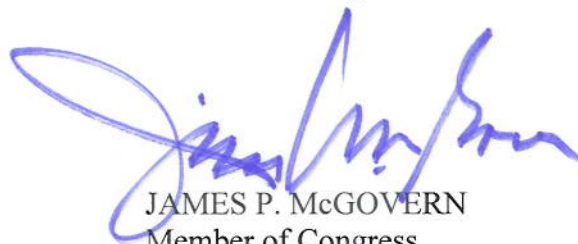
JIM McDERMOTT
Member of Congress



KEITH ELLISON
Member of Congress



JOHN CONYERS
Member of Congress



JAMES P. McGOVERN
Member of Congress



HANK JOHNSON
Member of Congress



BETTY McCOLLUM
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