

BILL SUMMARY

May 2012

Prevent Iran from Acquiring a Nuclear Weapons Capability (H. Res. 568 and S. Res. 380)

The House on May 17 passed a resolution (H. Res. 568) by an overwhelming vote of 401-11 asserting that it is in the vital national interest of the United States to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability. Iran's acquisition of such a capability—even before it possesses an actual nuclear weapon—would mark a significant new regional danger, as Tehran would be able to use its status as a nuclear-capable state to increase its regional leverage, threaten broad American interests, and likely spur a nuclear arms race. A similar resolution (S. Res. 380) remains pending in the Senate.

Both resolutions support a policy of prevention by clearly rejecting any policy that would seek to rely on containing a nuclear-capable Iran. The resolutions do not authorize the use of force. The measures do call for continued and increasing economic and diplomatic pressure to persuade Iran to meet its international obligations of suspending its uranium enrichment activities, leading to a permanent agreement verifiably assuring that Iran's nuclear program is entirely peaceful.

The House resolution (H. Res. 568) was introduced by House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL) and Ranking Member Howard Berman (D-CA). The Senate resolution (S. Res. 380) was introduced by Sens. Robert Casey (D-PA), Lindsey Graham (R-SC) and Joseph Lieberman (I-CT).

Key Provisions:

- Strongly supports U.S. policy to prevent the Iranian government from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability.
- Warns that time is limited to prevent the Iranian government from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability.
- Urges continued and increasing economic and diplomatic pressure on Iran until it agrees to suspend its nuclear program and fully cooperate with international inspectors, leading to a permanent agreement verifiably assuring that Iran's nuclear program is entirely peaceful.
- Rejects any U.S. policy that would rely on efforts to contain a nuclear weapons-capable Iran.
- Urges the president to reaffirm the unacceptability of an Iran with a nuclear-weapons capability and to oppose any policy that would rely on containment as an option in response to the Iranian nuclear threat.