

MEMO

April 10, 2015

Congress Must Review Any Agreement with Iran

Congress must review any final agreement reached between the P5+1 and Iran. An agreement with such profound national security implications as this one must be subjected to the constitutional system of checks and balances that is the bedrock of our democracy. If the agreement achieves U.S. objectives, it will withstand congressional scrutiny, and the president should welcome congressional review.

The Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act of 2015 (S.615) establishes a procedure for congressional review of any nuclear agreement with Iran.

- Authored by Sens. Bob Corker (R-TN) and Robert Menendez (D-NJ), the bipartisan legislation provides Congress the opportunity to review any deal prior to Iran receiving sanctions relief and establishes the procedure for Congress to vote on the agreement.
- If Congress adopts a joint resolution that disapproves of the agreement, the bill prohibits the president from providing Iran statutory sanctions relief. The joint resolution would be subject to a presidential veto.
- The bill would require the president to notify Congress of any credible and accurate information related to a potentially significant breach of the agreement. The president must then determine if the violation constitutes a “material breach” of the agreement.
- If Iran is found to have materially breached the agreement, the bill provides for expedited consideration of legislation that reinstates any sanctions waived or suspended.

An agreement with such profound national security implications must be able to withstand congressional scrutiny.

- Given the immense stakes for the United States, Israel and other important American allies, this deal should be subject to the utmost scrutiny. President Obama himself has welcomed appropriate congressional scrutiny.
- Congressional review of an agreement will not interfere with the implementation of a deal, should one be reached. The administration has been clear that Iran will receive no sanctions relief until it completes steps to constrain its nuclear program – a process that will take months.
- Congressionally-mandated sanctions drove Iran to the negotiating table. Congress should have the ability to review a deal that suspends those sanctions and seeks their eventual lifting.
- Congressional review is particularly fair and appropriate since any final agreement will likely be presented to both the Iranian parliament and the United Nations for endorsement. Congress should have at least the same opportunity to examine, debate and vote on any final agreement.

Recent polling data shows that the American people overwhelmingly support congressional review of any deal.

- The Pew Research Center and Rasmussen Reports each found that more than 60 percent of respondents believe Congress should have final authority for approving a deal.
- A Fox News poll found that 76 percent of respondents believe President Obama should be required to get congressional approval for any deal reached with Iran on its nuclear program.
- A Quinnipiac University poll found nearly two-thirds of voters in the swing states of Florida, Ohio and Pennsylvania support legislation that requires congressional approval for any deal.

Congress has historically reviewed significant non-proliferation and arms control treaties.

- Among the arms control treaties ratified with strong bipartisan support are: three Strategic Arms Reduction Treaties (START) with Russia, the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Biological Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention, and the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty.
- Congress has a legitimate interest in reviewing this agreement in the same way it has reviewed dozens of nuclear cooperation agreements with other countries.
- The U.S.-India civilian nuclear cooperation agreement was approved by Congress in 2008, and agreements with Vietnam and Taiwan were submitted for congressional review by President Obama in 2014.
- An agreement with Iran would entail far more profound national security implications than many other measures that Congress routinely reviews.