

MEMMO

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Congress Must Reauthorize the Iran Sanctions Act

The Iran Sanctions Act (ISA) is a critical bipartisan piece of legislation that constitutes the core of American sanctions on Iran. It is set to expire on Dec. 31, 2016, and must be renewed by Congress to remain in effect. It is crucial that Congress reauthorize ISA to ensure that the architecture is in place for “snapback” sanctions should Iran violate the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

What is ISA?

Originally passed in 1996, ISA targets investments in Iran’s energy sector, the leading segment of the Iranian economy. The law helped push the Iranian regime to negotiate its illicit nuclear program, ultimately leading to the 2015 JCPOA. Renewing ISA will help ensure that there are sanctions in place to “snap back” should Iran violate the nuclear deal.

Why is ISA Important?

ISA represents the core sanctions infrastructure America may need to hold Iran accountable for violations of the JCPOA. Congressional reauthorization of ISA will send a strong message to the Iranian leadership that America is strictly monitoring JCPOA compliance and will hold Tehran to its international obligations.



Congress must reauthorize the Iran Sanctions Act to ensure that the architecture is in place for “snapback” sanctions should Iran violate the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

What Happens if ISA is not Renewed?

According to the terms of the JCPOA—which assumes the reauthorization of ISA—the lifting of ISA is to take place in year eight of the agreement. Failure to reauthorize will remove important American leverage to ensure long-term Iranian compliance with the deal. It will also provide an unwarranted concession to the world’s leading state sponsor of terrorism. Since the JCPOA was announced, Iran has illegally conducted ballistic missile tests, enhanced its support for international terrorist organizations, boosted its deployment of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps forces to Syria, and increased its human rights abuses at home. Allowing ISA to lapse will only further empower Tehran.