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AIPAC Applauds Senate Action On Comprehensive Iran Sanctions Law

AIPAC applauds the Senate Banking Committee for taking decisive action today to advance comprehensive Iran sanctions legislation. Led by Banking Committee Chairman Chris Dodd (D-CT) and Ranking Member Richard Shelby (R-AL), the committee passed the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability and Divestment Act of 2009 by a vote of 23-0.

The Dodd-Shelby legislation consolidates elements of several bills introduced earlier in the Senate, and adds additional features. Among them is S. 908, the Iran Refined Petroleum Sanctions Act, which enjoys broad bipartisan backing and has 76 cosponsors. IRPSA was originally introduced by Sens. Evan Bayh (D-IN), Jon Kyl (R-AZ) and Joseph Lieberman (I-CT). Similar legislation has 334 co-sponsors in the U.S. House and was passed out of the House Foreign Affairs Committee on October 28, 2009.

IRPSA expands U.S. sanctions against Iran by strengthening the president's authority to impose penalties on companies providing refined petroleum to Iran or helping Iran expand its own refining capacity. Shipping companies that transport the refined petroleum to Iran and their insurers are also targeted by the legislation.

During the 2008 presidential campaign, then-Senator Barack Obama backed such a move, saying, "If we can prevent them from importing the gasoline that they need ... that starts changing their cost-benefit analysis. That starts putting the squeeze on them."

The Dodd-Shelby Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability and Divestment Act also includes key elements of S. 1065, the Iran Sanctions Enabling Act (ISEA). ISEA authorizes state divestment efforts and provides a safe harbor for asset managers. S.1065 was introduced in 2009 by Sens. Robert Casey (D-PA) and Sam Brownback (R-KS) and has 39 cosponsors. The legislation mirrors a bill introduced during the last Congress by Brownback and then-Sen. Barack Obama (D-IL). The U.S. House passed ISEA on Oct. 14 by a vote of 414-6.

In addition, the Dodd-Shelby comprehensive legislation includes provisions originally part of legislation introduced by Senators Dodd and Shelby in the last Congress aimed at stopping the diversion of sensitive technologies to Iran through third-country ports.

This comprehensive Iran sanctions legislation will reinforce American diplomacy should Iran continue to defy the international community and five U.N. Security Council resolutions by continuing to enrich uranium, refuse unfettered nuclear inspections and cover up the extent of its nuclear program. The law would force Tehran to confront a real choice: continue its illicit nuclear program and risk economic ruin or suspend the program and open the door to relief from sanctions.

Key Provisions of the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability and Divestment Act:

- Strengthens the president's authority to impose sanctions on any entity that provides Iran with refined petroleum resources, engages in activity that could contribute to Iran's ability to import such resources, or helps Iran to maintain or expand its domestic refining capacity.
- Bans U.S. government contracts with entities meeting the criteria for sanctions related to the provision of refined petroleum to Iran or entities investing more than \$20 million in Iran's energy sector.
- Authorizes sanctions against companies if their subsidiaries invest in Iran's energy sector or provide Iran refined petroleum resources.
- Bans U.S. government contracts with entities exporting sensitive technology to Iran meant to be used to restrict the free flow of unbiased information or to disrupt, monitor, or otherwise restrict speech of the people of Iran.
- Codifies the U.S. import and export ban on goods to and from Iran and freezes the U.S. assets held by certain Iranians.
- Requires the president to report every six months on certain investments in Iran's energy sector and any activity related to Iran's refined petroleum imports, since January 1, 2009. The report also must include the determination of the president as to whether each investment or activity qualifies as a sanctionable offense.
- Urges the president to consider sanctions on the Central Bank of Iran and any other Iranian bank engaged in proliferation activities or support of terrorist groups.
- Expresses the sense of Congress that the United States should continue to target Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps with economic sanctions.
- Authorizes states divestment efforts and provides a safe harbor for asset managers.
- Mandates the identification of countries of concern related to the transshipment of sensitive technologies to Iran and provides assistance to these countries to upgrade their export controls. It also subjects countries of concern to additional U.S. licensing requirements for sensitive technologies.

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