

PRESS RELEASE

CONGRESS TO PRESIDENT OBAMA: NOW IS THE TIME FOR “CRIPPLING SANCTIONS” ON IRAN

For Immediate Release
April 14, 2010

Contact: Josh Block
press@aipac.org

Coming immediately on the heels of the historic nuclear summit where the entire international community made clear there is no task facing humanity more urgent than preventing a nuclear Iran, the United States Congress has united in a historic bipartisan show of urgency to send one message to President Obama: Now is the time for America to work with our allies to enforce crippling sanctions on Iran.

AIPAC strongly applauds both the [House](#) and [Senate](#) for dispatching strong [bipartisan letters](#) to President Obama urging him to “join with those allies who are prepared for action to immediately impose crippling sanctions on Iran,” saying only such action “offers the prospect of persuading Tehran to turn away from its dangerous course.”

Signed by over three-quarters of the entire Congress – both the House and Senate – the letters underscore the urgent, overwhelming and bipartisan demand in Congress that the United States lead the international community to immediately staunch the growing threat of a nuclear Iran. The letters also call on President Obama to reaffirm that America “can and will prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability.”

The House letter is being sent to President Obama with [366 signatures](#) and the Senate letter, currently at [81 signatures](#), is expected to be sent as early as this afternoon.

The House and Senate letters both read, “Mr. President, we will soon complete our work on [Iranian sanctions legislation](#) that has received the [backing of overwhelming majorities](#) in [both Chambers of Congress](#). We believe that America, together with allies who share our approach, can force the Iranian regime to face the tough choice between international isolation and possible reconciliation. We can do this by imposing punishing measures on the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, sanctioning Iran’s banking system, and dramatically impacting Iran’s ability to import refined petroleum.”

“Accordingly, we urge you today to reaffirm boldly and unambiguously that the US can and will prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability. We call on you to fulfill your June 2008 pledge that you would do ‘everything in my power to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon.’ Certainly, one way to begin would be to reverse the practice under which the US

government has awarded at least \$107 billion over the past decade in federal contracts to companies investing in or doing business in Iran. We urge you to join with those allies who are prepared for action to immediately impose crippling sanctions on Iran. Only such action on our part offers the prospect of persuading Tehran to turn away from its dangerous course,” reads the House version, in language almost identical to the Senate letter.

AIPAC applauds the leadership of Sens. Charles Schumer (D-NY) and Lindsey Graham (R-SC) as well as Reps. Jesse Jackson Jr. (D-IL) and Mike Pence (R-IN) on these letters and in the urgent overall effort to stop Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons capability.

Iran’s pursuit of nuclear weapons poses a grave threat to the security of states in the region and America’s national security, risks sparking an arms race in the Middle East, and dramatically raises the specter of such weapons making their way into the hands of terrorists. Iran remains the world’s leading sponsor of terrorist groups, including Hamas and Hizballah – a terrorist group that has killed more Americans than any other terrorist group except al Qaeda.

###

FULL TEXT of HOUSE LETTER

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing you out of our concern that Iran is growing ever closer to nuclear weapons capability, a fact demanding immediate action on the part of the United States. We want to assure you of strong bipartisan support for the tough and decisive measures that we hope you will undertake to address this grave problem.

Iran’s nuclear weapons program represents a severe threat to American national interests. Iran’s acquisition of nuclear weapons could lead to the proliferation of these weapons throughout the Middle East and beyond, destabilizing the global non-proliferation regime and greatly increasing the likelihood of such weapons falling into the hands of terrorists. It would also dramatically expand Iranian influence and threaten our allies in the region. It would undercut prospects for peace between Israel and her neighbors, with emboldened Iranian surrogates enjoying the strategic backing of an Iranian nuclear umbrella. And it would pose an existential threat to the State of Israel.

Iran is making steady progress in its nuclear program. It now has stored enough low enriched uranium to serve as the core for two nuclear weapons. It will soon be able to install much more advanced and efficient centrifuges. Iran has recently begun to enrich uranium to twenty percent fissile. Its weaponization program now appears to be at an advanced stage.

Mr. President, you have stated this issue is a priority for your administration. You have attempted to engage the Iranian regime for over a year. You have gone to the United Nations Security Council in an effort to impose tough new sanctions on Iran. But time is not on our side. We cannot allow those who would oppose or delay sanctions to govern

either the timing or content of our efforts. As you said last July, we cannot wait until we “wake up one day and find ourselves in a much worse situation and unable to act.”

Accordingly, we urge you today to reaffirm boldly and unambiguously that the US can and will prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability. We call on you to fulfill your June 2008 pledge that you would do “everything in my power to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon.” Certainly, one way to begin would be to reverse the practice under which the US government has awarded at least \$107 billion over the past decade in federal contracts to companies investing in or doing business in Iran. We urge you to join with those allies who are prepared for action to immediately impose crippling sanctions on Iran. Only such action on our part offers the prospect of persuading Tehran to turn away from its dangerous course.

Mr. President, we will soon complete our work on the Iranian sanctions legislation that has received the backing of overwhelming majorities in both Houses of Congress. We believe that America together with allies who share our approach can force Iran’s regime to face the tough choice between international isolation – if it continues its nuclear quest – and possible reconciliation. We can do this by imposing punishing measures on the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, rocking Iran’s banking system, and dramatically impacting Iran’s ability to import or refine petroleum.

We urge you to move rapidly to implement your existing authority on Iran and the legislation we send you, and to galvanize the international community for immediate, devastating steps. The hour is late. Now is the time for action.

Sincerely,

Jesse L. Jackson, Jr.
Member of Congress

Mike Pence
Member of Congress

Text of Senate Letter

Dear Mr. President:

We write you out of our concern that Iran is growing ever closer to achieving nuclear weapons capability, a fact demanding immediate action. We want to assure you of strong bipartisan support for the tough and decisive measures that we hope you will undertake to address this grave problem.

Iran's nuclear weapons program represents a severe threat to American national interests. Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons could lead to the proliferation of nuclear weapons throughout the Middle East and beyond, unsettling the global non-proliferation regime and ending any hopes for a nuclear-weapons free world. Additionally, it would greatly increase the likelihood of such weapons falling into the hands of terrorists. Iran could increase its attempts at destabilizing its neighbors, encourage terrorism against the United States and Israel, and the risk of both prospects for peace between Israel and its neighbors, with emboldened Iranian surrogates enjoying the strategic backing of an Iranian nuclear umbrella. And it would pose a potential threat to our closest ally, the State of Israel.

Iran is making steady progress in its nuclear program. Iran now has stored enough low enriched uranium to serve as the core for two nuclear weapons. They will soon be able to install more advanced and efficient centrifuges. Iran has recently announced that it will begin to enrich uranium to twenty percent fissile. Its weaponization program now appears to be at an advanced stage. Iran has defied several UN Security Council resolutions directing it to suspend enrichment and has rejected its opportunity to fully explain its nuclear activities to the International Atomic Energy Agency. Credible evidence suggests that if Iran's nuclear program continues to progress at its current rate, the Iranian government could certainly have a nuclear weapons capability well before your current term in office expires.

Preventing Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons remains a diplomatic imperative. But time is not on the side of those who seek to prevent a nuclear Iran. We cannot allow those who would oppose or delay sanctions to govern either the timing or content of our efforts. As you said last July, we cannot wait until we "wake up one day and find ourselves in a much worse situation and unable to act."

Accordingly, we urge you today to reaffirm that the U.S. can and will prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability. Now is the time to put into practice your June 2008 pledge that you would do "everything in my power to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon." One way to begin would be to reverse the practice under which the US government has awarded at least \$107 billion in federal contracts over the past decade to companies investing in, or doing business in, Iran. We also urge you to join with those allies who are prepared for action to immediately impose crippling sanctions on Iran. Only such action on our part – combined with the open door you have promised of negotiations with Iran – offers the prospect of persuading Tehran to turn away from its dangerous course.

Mr. President, we will soon complete our work on Iranian sanctions legislation that has received the backing of overwhelming majorities in both Chambers of Congress. We believe that America, together with allies who share our approach, can force Iran's regime to face the tough choice between international isolation and possible reconciliation. We can do this by imposing punishing measures on the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, sanctioning Iran's banking system, and dramatically impacting Iran's ability to import refined petroleum.

We urge you to move quickly to implement your existing authority on Iran and the legislation we send you, and to galvanize the international community to take immediate, substantive steps. Now is the time for action focused on preventing a nuclear Iran. We look forward to working with you on this important task.

Sincerely,

Charles E. Schumer
Lindsey Graham