



January 20, 2015

The Honorable Richard C. Shelby
United States Senate
304 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-0103

Dear Senator Shelby:

As negotiations between the P5plus1 and the government of Iran to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons continue, some key members of Congress appear intent on legislating more punitive sanctions on Iran's economy. They argue that Congress has a clear role in charting U.S. foreign policy and that additional sanctions pressure will strengthen the U.S. negotiating position.

The efficacy of the byzantine sanctions that burden Iran's economy inevitably depend on their multilateral character, a fact underscored by President Obama's repeated announcement he will veto any sanctions legislation passed while negotiations continue. The Administration does not want to give the Iranian government any opportunity to separate the United States and the European Union.

The NFTC and USA*Engage believe that the Administration should be given the chance to see whether the negotiations can produce a constructive and substantial agreement. The major components of such an agreement have been well discussed in the policy community, as have its benefits for the region in which Iran is a critical actor.

The question remains, however, regarding Congress's role, since much of the sanctions regime is statutory. In the event of a workable agreement, eventual congressional action will be required.

For these reasons, some congressional review of an agreement seems inevitable, but we continue to believe that the best course Congress can take is to wait until the negotiations either conclude successfully or fail before acting. At that point, if the agreement is deemed constructive and substantial, then the Congress should grant the Administration full authority to suspend and/or repeal the sanctions tied to the nuclear issue.

Such a course presumably will give the nuclear negotiations maximum space to conclude free of political pressures and presumptive scapegoats and allow the U.S. and its allies a landscape on which to make rational policy decisions, whatever the outcome of the negotiations.

Yours truly,



Richard N. Sawaya
Vice President
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William A. Reinsch
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