

May 1, 2009

To: Members of the United States Congress

We write to express our concern with the most recent legislation to expand sanctions against Iran, H.R. 2194/S. 908.

America's Iran strategy has focused exclusively on sanctions, threats, and isolation for three decades. Yet, with all the economic pain the sanctions have imposed on the Iranian economy, there has not been a single instance in which that pain has translated into a desirable change in Iranian policy. As a result, we now face a more powerful and problematic Iran than ever before.

Despite this strategy's past failures, some in Congress are again proposing unilateral sanctions in the hope that threatening stronger pressure down the line might alter Iran's problematic behavior. We believe this approach does not offer a solution and will in fact prove to be counterproductive to President Obama's diplomatic effort.

Building support for new sanctions now--before diplomacy has been given enough time to succeed--will suggest that America is not serious about engagement and will actually make negotiations less likely to take place. Just as we are unwilling to let Iran use talks to stall for time, Tehran will not come to the table if we appear to be simply "going through the motions" of diplomacy in order to justify harsher sanctions. Just by introducing this bill, and gaining support for it, Congress risks undermining President Obama's diplomatic strategy.

Additionally, this legislation targets many of America's closest allies, calling for severe punishments on some of their most important companies. But now is the time when we need their help more than ever, both to deal with Iran and to overcome the global recession.

Senator Jon Kyl of Arizona described the rationale for this legislation by saying: "*You can do business with Iran's \$250 billion economy or our \$13 trillion economy, but not both.*" This is exactly the type of "go-it-alone" approach that has done such damage to America's standing in the international community. The United States cannot solve this problem alone; we need the cooperation of our allies and the rest of the global community.

Only through committed, multilateral and sustained diplomacy can the conflict with Iran be resolved. We stand ready to work with you as you pursue this critical issue.

Signed,

American Conservative Defense Alliance
American Friends Service Committee
Bipartisan Security Group
Council for a Livable World
DownsizeDC.org, Inc.
Fellowship of Reconciliation
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Global Security Institute
Just Foreign Policy

Mainstream Media Project
National Foreign Trade Council
National Iranian American Council
Open Society Policy Center
Pax Christi USA
Peace Action
Peace Action West
Physicians for Social Responsibility
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
USA*Engage
Voters for Peace
Women's Action for New Directions