

Rep. Henry A. Waxman
H.R. 282, The Iran Freedom Support Act
April 26, 2006

Mr. Speaker. I rise in strong support of H.R. 282, the Iran Freedom Support Act.

This legislation will strengthen bilateral sanctions and require timely action to penalize companies that violate the law. For too long, loopholes in the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act have impaired its effectiveness in starving international investment in Iran's oil and gas sector. Instead, investigations of sanctions violations have languished while subsidiaries of big oil companies like Halliburton have been able to do business in Iran without penalty.

The bill will also increase support for groups that promote human rights and political reform in Iran. This despotic regime has stifled a once vibrant civil society with economic stagnation, media censorship, and oppressive religious extremism. By investing in the Iranian people we will help bolster those who are fighting for a better future.

I am especially pleased that independent radio and television stations that broadcast in Iran will be eligible for assistance under this Act. Los Angeles, which is home to the largest Iranian expatriate community in the world, has a number of successful satellite broadcasting programs that are highly popular in Iran. They are a valuable untapped resource for promoting democratic ideas, pluralism, and countering anti-Western rhetoric in Iran's state-run media.

In the few months since the rigged election that brought him to power, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has managed to heighten propaganda to a level unseen since the revolution. With overt support for Hamas and Hezbollah and threats to destroy Israel and unleash suicide bombers against the United States and Britain, he has vocally advertised his government's nuclear pursuits and its prominent role as a state sponsor of terrorism.

The U.N. Security Council's upcoming meeting to reexamine Iran's nuclear activities will be a crucial opportunity for resolute action. Iran's stonewalling of the IAEA has been egregious. The scope and clandestine nature of its nuclear operations belie its claims to be pursuing a peaceful civilian program. Its announcement that it has successfully enriched uranium makes clear that it fully intends to accelerate its enrichment efforts. The international community must develop a consensus to intervene and deter Iran from continuing on this destructive path.

If we are to succeed, it is important that the Administration be more responsible in building its case against Iran than it was in pursuing action against Iraq. Unlike Iraq's nuclear program, which never materialized, Iran's program is real and much more dangerous. It is disturbing that our credibility is already being shaken by revelations that the White House may once again be pursuing exaggerated intelligence and a drumbeat toward preemptive unilateral military strikes.

We cannot afford to alienate our allies or undermine the confidence and trust of the American people. As H.R. 282 shows, there are certain limited steps we can take on our own to have a positive impact. But there should be no illusion that it is in our interest or our ability to address this issue alone. Other nations have a stake in preventing Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons and we must act in consultation.