From left, US Representative Steve Chabot, then-Republican US vice presidential candidate Mike Pence and Pence's wife, Karen, wave to the crowd during an election campaign rally in Mason, Ohio, on Oct. 17 last year.
Photo: AP

A bill that seeks to encourage visits between Taiwan and the US at all levels was on Thursday passed by a US House of Representatives subcommittee in the first step toward its legislation.

The US House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific unanimously passed the Taiwan travel act bill, which was initiated by US Representative Steve Chabot, and cosponsored by US representatives Brad Sherman and Ed Royce, chairman of the US House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

"The United States government should encourage visits between the United States and Taiwan at all levels," the bill states.

It says that since the enactment of the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) in 1979, ties between Taiwan and the US have suffered from insufficient high-level communication due to the self-imposed restrictions that the US maintains on visits by high-ranking officials.

The bill, which seeks to eliminate the restrictions, is to be sent to the US House Committe on Foreign Affairs for approval.

A similar bill with the same title was also introduced to the US Senate. It was initiated by Republican senators Marco Rubio, Jim Inhofe and Cory Gardner; and Democratic senators Sherrod Brown, Bob Menendez and Gary Peters.

Before the bill can become law, it must be passed by both the House and Senate, then signed by US President Donald Trump.

President Tsai Ing-wen (□□□) yesterday expressed her appreciation to US officials, including US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, for their support of Taiwan.

“Over past few days, we’ve seen US officials, including SecState Tillerson, speak in support of #TaiwanRelationsAct & Taiwan-US relations,” Tsai tweeted.

Tillerson told a US House committee hearing that while the US remains committed to its “one China” policy, it fully intends to fulfill all commitments to Taiwan under the TRA.

The TRA is a US law under which the US is committed to provide Taiwan with defensive weapons.

Tsai also expressed appreciation for the subcommittee’s unanimous passage of the bill.

“Taiwan appreciates continued support of friends in US, Japan & others, & will continue to work together for peace & stability in region,” Tsai tweeted.

The US allows authoritarian Chinese leaders to visit Washington at any time and gives them a red-carpet welcome, but has shunned democratically elected leaders from its long-term friend Taiwan, Washington-based Formosan Association for Public Affairs (FAPA) president Peter Chen (□□□) said in a news release.

Only Washington, not Beijing, has the right to decide who can visit the US, Chen said.

With relatively new governments in office in Taiwan and the US, it is an opportune time to change the rules on visits by Taiwanese officials, he said.

Source: Taipei Times - 2017/06/17