

US senators urge election meddling probe

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Supporters of Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) Kaohsiung mayoral candidate Han Kuo-yu cheer and wave flags as they watch a ballot count display at the KMT's Kaohsiung office on Nov. 24. Han won the election.

Photo: CNA

Six US senators have asked US government agencies to help Taiwan investigate China's alleged meddling in its elections and take action to prevent Beijing from interfering in elections in democracies worldwide.

"We appreciate your actions your departments are already taking to address CCP [Chinese Communist Party] foreign interference," the senators said in a letter addressed to US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, US Secretary of the Treasury Steven Mnuchin, US Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats and FBI Director Christopher Wray.

"We encourage you to work closely with Taiwan authorities to thoroughly investigate these allegations and, if necessary, take swift action to deter future CCP interference in elections in Taiwan or elsewhere across the globe," senators Catherine Cortez Masto, Marco Rubio, Christopher Coons, Cory Gardner, Michael Bennet and Ted Cruz said in the letter dated on Thursday last week.

Taipei has suggested that illegal campaign contributions to pro-Beijing political candidates were one of the primary tools of alleged CCP interference in the Nov. 24 nine-in-one elections, the letter said.

The Taiwanese government has also accused the CCP of "using disinformation to shape public opinion of political candidates deemed unsympathetic to Beijing's interests" and has said that

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“the CCP spread false information through social media and messaging platforms,” it added.

The CCP’s attempts to erode democratic processes and norms around the world threaten US partnerships and prosperity, and if Taipei’s allegations are proved true, it “would be deeply concerning not only for Taiwan’s future, but also for fellow democracies ... where the CCP choose to interfere,” the senators said.

“We believe such allegations must be taken seriously if free societies are to continue to thrive,” they added.

Citing comments by US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Scott Busby that praised Taiwan as “an invaluable model to others,” the senators said that democracies such as the US and Taiwan need to stand together.

It was especially important at a time of democratic backsliding and human rights abuses elsewhere in the Indo-Pacific region that the two sides join hands to promote “a brighter future, free of repression, censorship and exploitation,” they said.

WELCOME SUPPORT

“We write to express our support for efforts to counter interference of this nature and to state unequivocally that we stand shoulder to shoulder with democracies fighting attempts to undermine their sovereignty and freedom,” the senators added.

On the sidelines of a meeting of the Legislative Yuan’s Foreign and National Defense Committee yesterday, Minister of Foreign Affairs Joseph Wu (吳敦義) thanked the US Congress for its support and said that Taiwan has had many discussions with US authorities on the matter.

Taiwan hopes to join in discussions with other nations to help prevent similar interference in

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democratic practices in other free nations, he said.

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