A new resolution formally calling on US President Barack Obama to move toward a free-trade agreement (FTA) with Taiwan has been introduced into the US Congress.

The resolution was signed by Democrat Robert Anderson and Republicans Scott Garrett and John Culberson.

It urges Obama to make a free-trade agreement with Taiwan a “top priority” and to order the US Trade Representative to “expedite negotiations.”

While it is unlikely that the resolution will pass this year — there is a powerful anti-free-trade sentiment in the current Congress — it is still significant because it will keep free trade with Taiwan on the agenda.

“A US-Taiwan FTA will free Taiwan from China’s economic stranglehold, which is, in fact, a potent nonmilitary instrument of influence that China is forging to affect political choices in Taiwan and to achieve the annexation of Taiwan,” said Bob Yang (□□□), president of the Formosan Association for Public Affairs.

“If and when the US exercises its leadership to ink an FTA with Taiwan, other like-minded democracies will undoubtedly follow suit. This would permit Taiwan to broaden its trade and other international relations, thereby giving Taiwan an opportunity to escape the death embrace of China,” he said.

During a congressional briefing last month, Andrews said that for both “economic and strategic” reasons, the time had arrived for an FTA with Taiwan.

He said an FTA would act as an important affirmation that the US regarded the people of Taiwan as “a free, sovereign and independent people.”

‘CAGE’

Andrews said that an ECFA being negotiated with China was in his view more of a “cage than a framework.”

“It reflects a negotiation from the point of disadvantage,” he said.

“Any duly elected government has the autonomy to negotiate any agreement it sees fit for its people, but that presupposes a negotiation that is free of coercion and is conducted in a truly bilateral, equivalent context. And that is most assuredly not the case,” Andrews said.

Source: Taipei Times - 2010/05/10