

US legislator urges Washington action on Chen Shui-bian

Written by Taipei Times

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US Representative Steve Chabot is urging Washington to become directly involved in the case of former president Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁), asking US Secretary of State John Kerry to pressure Taipei into granting permanent medical parole to Chen.

Last month, the Ministry of Justice granted Chen 30 days of medical parole amid reports that his health was failing fast. The parole was extended earlier this month.

Chen, 64, is serving a 20-year prison sentence after being convicted of corruption.

Kerry on Wednesday appeared before the US House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee to answer questions about the US Department of State's budget for next year.

Chabot said that he had visited Chen in prison last year and found him to be suffering from "a whole range" of medical conditions, including severe depression, Parkinson's disease and the effects of multiple strokes.

Chabot said that together with former non-voting delegate to the US House of Representatives Eni Faleomavaega, he had "beseeched" Ma to grant medical parole.

Chen was released for 30 days of medical parole last month, but Chabot told Kerry that it was not enough.

Chabot said that unless there was some new health setback, Chen would probably be taken back to prison soon.

"His condition was just startling," Chabot said. "I would urge you to look at the case."

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Chabot said that while the Chen case might be considered an “internal problem” for Taiwan, there could still be a US role.

He said that while China would not admit it, Taiwan was a de facto country and “for the most part,” the US considered that to be the case.

“You can’t tell them what to do,” Chabot said.

However, he urged US President Barack Obama’s administration to “look at this matter, to the extent that we can exercise some reason on the Taiwanese government.”

Chabot said that the medical parole should be made permanent and that Chen should be allowed to stay at home under the care of his family.

Answering Chabot’s plea to consider the situation, Kerry replied: “Will do.”

The committee ran out of time before members could ask Kerry all of the questions they had prepared. As a result, Kerry agreed to answer questions submitted in writing.

Committee sources said it was likely that some of the questions — to be sent to the Department of State over the next few days — would concern Taiwan. They said that some members may ask written questions about Taiwan’s security, strategic importance, self-defense and lack of international space.

At least one representative had planned to ask Kerry about the risks of cross-strait economic integration.

Source: [Taipei Times - 2015/02/27](#)