

US resolution reaffirms TRA, 'six assurances'

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The US House of Representatives' Foreign Affairs Committee on Wednesday unanimously passed a resolution reaffirming the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) and the "six assurances" as the "cornerstone of US-Taiwan relations."

The resolution is to go before the full House, where it is expected to pass without difficulty.

The resolution is significant because it reinforces US policy and underlines US support for Taiwan at a time when relations with China are becoming increasingly edgy over Beijing's militarization of the South China Sea.

US Representative Brad Sherman, a Democrat, said that Taiwan is an important ally and the US Congress needed to do everything possible to make sure that it remains that way.

Sherman said that former US president Ronald Reagan issued the "six assurances" in 1982, stipulating that the US will not set an end date to arms sales to Taiwan, will not alter the TRA, will not hold consultations with China over arms sales to Taiwan, will not mediate between Taiwan and China, will not pressure Taiwan to negotiate with China and will not formally recognize Chinese sovereignty over Taiwan.

The "six assurances" had been a verbal pledge and the resolution solidified the commitment in legislation for the first time, Sherman said.

He said the resolution urges the US president and the US Department of State to affirm the "six assurances" "publicly, proactively and consistently" as a cornerstone of US-Taiwan relations.

"This is an exciting time for Taiwanese," said US Representative Eliot Engel, the committee's ranking Democrat.

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He said that he is “very hopeful” about the success of president-elect Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文).

“As Taiwan’s democracy prepares for a political transition, it’s important that the US signals its unwavering support for Taiwan’s defense, for its participation on the global stage, for its robust democracy,” Engel said.

US Representative Ed Royce, the committee’s Republican chairman, said that the US Congress had “long championed” a strong relationship with Taiwan and had pressed successive administrations to fulfill their obligation to sell defensive arms to Taiwan.

US Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, another Republican, said that the US must remain fully and firmly committed to the TRA and the “six assurances” and that Taiwan is a major ally, friend and security partner of the US.

“Taiwan must have the capability to defend itself from aggression from China whether of a political, economic or military nature, and it is critical that both Taiwan and China know our commitment to Taiwan has not wavered one bit,” she said.

US Representative Matt Salmon, a Republican, said that he would be attending Tsai’s inauguration ceremony next month and that Taiwan’s democracy is incredibly important to the region as a “guidepost” for other nations to follow.

US Representative Steve Chabot, the Republican who introduced the resolution, said that Taiwan faced an unrelenting threat from China and that China had about 1,600 ballistic missiles aimed at Taiwan.

Chabot said it is very important for both Taiwan and the US to build up their military forces.

The one thing that will make armed conflict more likely is weakness, Chabot said.

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“As long as Taiwan and the US are strong, I don’t think China will ever take any overt military action,” he said.

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