

Bills urge Washington ‘Taiwan Office’

Written by Taipei Times

Saturday, 05 February 2022 07:50 -



The nameplate of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in Washington is pictured in an undated photograph.

Photo: Lu Yi-hsuan, Tapei Times

A bipartisan group of US lawmakers on Thursday proposed matching bills in the US Senate and US House of Representatives that would require the US to negotiate the renaming of Taiwan’s de facto embassy in Washington as the “Taiwan Representative Office.”

The mission is currently called the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office (TECRO).

Should the measures become law, any change in the office’s name could provide cover to smaller countries to take similar steps to boost engagement with Taiwan.

It might also create a new rift in US-China relations, which are at their lowest point in decades, as Washington is seeking to push back against what it sees as Beijing’s growing economic and military coercion.

The US does not have official ties with Taiwan, but is its biggest international backer.

The bills would direct the US Secretary of State to “seek to enter into negotiations” with TECRO to rename its office as the “Taiwan Representative Office.”

US Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Bob Menendez and US Senator Marco Rubio sponsored the Senate bill, with US representatives John Curtis and Chris Pappas leading on the House version.

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"The US must make clear that, despite all efforts by the Chinese Communist Party to intimidate and coerce Taiwan, hostile powers have no right to claim sovereignty over democratic countries," Rubio said.

Menendez told reporters that the bills were consistent with the US' Taiwan Relations Act, which defines Washington's unofficial ties with Taiwan, and demonstrate its support for the nation "to determine its own future."

"We must take this step to strengthen our diplomatic partnership with Taiwan and counter China's repeated attempts to threaten and coerce nations around the globe," Pappas said.

In Taipei, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday expressed gratitude to the US Congress for its bipartisan support and the enhancement of Taiwan-US relations.

The White House, the US Department of State and China's embassy in Washington did not respond immediately to requests for comment.

China downgraded its diplomatic relations with Lithuania and pressed multinationals to sever ties with the country after Taipei last year opened an office in Vilnius, bearing the name "Taiwan."

Beijing calls Taiwan's status the most sensitive issue in China-US relations and the basis for ties between the two superpowers.

Additional reporting by Aaron Tu, staff reporter

Source: [Taipei Times - 2022/02/05](#)