



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on August 3, 2012

House and Senate Vote to Increase Sanctions Against Iran

Both the U.S. Senate and House [voted](#) on  Wednesday to tighten sanctions against Iran's energy, shipping, and insurance sectors, in an effort to cut off the necessary funding for Iran to develop its nuclear program.

The Hill reports, "The bill would expand U.S. sanctions under the Iran Sanctions Act, and would sanction any company that deals with Iran's petroleum, petrochemical or natural gas sector." The bill also applies sanctions to companies that offer any services to Iran's energy, financial, consulting, or other industries, as well as to companies that insure Iran's oil sector or operate or insure the National Iranian Oil Company.

The legislation also creates a set of sanctions pertaining to human rights abuses in both Iran and Syria, requiring the Obama administration to identify those leaders guilty of such violations. Additionally, it requires the administration to block financial transactions with leaders in the Syrian government.

The vote followed an announcement from the Obama administration that additional sanctions would be imposed against Iran. Fresh sanctions will be imposed on foreign banks in China and Iraq that help Iran avoid the penalties. Obama's announcement is likely in response to accusations by GOP presidential contender Mitt Romney that Obama is not tough enough on Iran.

Addressing the new rounds of sanctions from Congress in addition to those announced by the White House, White House Deputy National Security Adviser Ben Rhodes said, "The congressional efforts can be complementary to what we're doing."

The Iran sanctions bill, H.R. 1905, was passed in the House by a vote of 421 to 6 and in the Senate by voice vote. The six House members who voted against the bill were Reps. Justin Amash (R-Mich.), John Duncan (R-Tenn.), Tim Johnson (R-Ill.), Walter Jones (R-N.C.), Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio), and Ron Paul (R-Texas).

Congressman Ron Paul delivered an impassioned [speech](#) against sanctions just before the vote, observing,

I think this bill would be better named if we called it "Obsession with Iran Act 2012" because this is what we continue to be doing is [being] obsessed with Iran and the idea that Iran is a threat to our national security.

He continued by establishing that Iran poses no demonstrable threat to the United States:

Iran happens to be a Third World nation; they have no significant Navy, Air Force, intercontinental ballistic missiles — the IAEA and the CIA said they're not on the verge of a nuclear weapon.

It's so similar to what we went through in the early part of this last decade when we were beating the war drums to go to war against Iraq, and it was all façade. There was no danger from Iraq.

When you put sanctions on a country, it's an act of war, and that's what this is all about. The first thing you do when war breaks out between two countries, is you put sanctions on a country, you blockade the country. So this is an act of war.

Paul went further by explaining that Iran does not have a history of violence that would suggest that the



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United States must engage in war with the country. “They don’t have a history of invading their neighboring countries,” he said. “The last time they were at war was with Iraq, and we bugged Iraq to go into Iran.”

Similarly, Rep. Dennis Kucinich stated that the bill would place the United States on a “path to war”:

It’s likely that any negotiated deal that would prevent a nuclear-armed Iran would provide for ... uranium enrichment for peaceful purposes under the framework of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Weapons Treaty, with strict safeguards and inspections. So we’re taking a path here that guarantees that we’re put on a glide slope right to war.

But House Foreign Affairs Committee chairwoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.) asserted that the bill is necessary in order to interrupt Iran’s economic development so that it does not produce nuclear weapons. “Ultimately, we will all be judged by a simple question: Did we stop Iran from getting a nuclear weapons capability? If the answer is no — if we fail — then nothing else matters,” she insisted, adding, “History is full of avoidable tragedies, of foolish countries that have allowed their enemies to prepare to destroy them. The entire world now is fully aware of Iran’s true intention. Now is the time to take a stand.”

Likewise, House Minority Whip Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) declared that Iran has proven to the world that additional sanctions are necessary:

There is no better evidence why this bill is so important than the fact that two weeks ago, a terrorist attack in Bulgaria that killed six innocent civilians, five of them vacationing Israelis. There have been numerous press reports linking Iran to that attack.

As long as Iran continues to pursue nuclear weapons, call for the destruction of Israel, and provide arms to terror groups like Hamas and Hezbollah, it will face the consequences in the form of sanctions ... isolation, and the continuing reality of the option of military action.

And Howard Berman (D-Calif.), ranking member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, contended that Congress can do even more to address the growing threat of a nuclear Iran. “Let there be no doubt, there is more we can do, more that we will do if Iran does not end its nuclear weapons program verifiably and completely,” he said.

The Senate passed the same bill later in the day by unanimous consent. As noted by The Hill, sanction legislation “has been very easy to pass in the last several Congresses, and this time it was no different.”

Senator Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) added that military action against Iran should remain a consideration, but asserted that increased sanctions are the best approach at this time to stop the country’s nuclear development: “Ratcheting up the economic pressure against Iran is imperative. So that Iran sees it’s not in their best interests economically to continue on this path [of nuclear weapons development].”

Meanwhile, officials in Iran have responded to the new sanctions, calling them “warfare.”



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