

I Voted Against the Iran Deal Because It Fails This Test

The first and most important duty of a government is the protection of its citizens. If we fail to do this, then all of our other activities and programs are of no effect.

As Congress and the President decide how to act in response to Iran's nuclear weapons program, this is our purpose, and the standard we must constantly bear in mind.

Negotiating with Iran at all is difficult, if only because of the regime's 36-year history of terrorism, brutality, and violations of human rights. As Nobel Peace Prize winner Elie Wiesel put it, "regimes rooted in brutality must never be trusted. And the words and actions of the leadership of Iran leave no doubt as to their intentions."

Nevertheless, I support finding a diplomatic solution to the crisis of a nuclear Iran. In March, I joined with 366 of my fellow members of Congress, including 130 Democrats, in a letter to President Obama. All of us agreed, though from different parts of the country, different backgrounds, and different parties, that any deal with Iran must last for multiple decades and include full disclosure of Iran's past nuclear pursuits.

In July, after nearly a decade of negotiation, the President made his proposal public. The proposed executive agreement would only be temporary. Iran's current low-enriched uranium would be reduced by 98%, but only for 10 years. Iran would be free to produce as much nuclear fuel as they wish after 15 years, and do research on advanced centrifuges after 8 years. And in a major deviation of nonproliferation precedent, the embargo on conventional arms trade and ballistic missiles trade with Iran would be lifted.

The President's proposal did not meet the bipartisan criteria we laid out in our letter. These provisions are bad enough by themselves to make this agreement deserve opposition, but since we found out about them, there have been some important developments that make the agreement even worse for the United States and its interests.

We found out, for example, that that United Nations' International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors will not have access to the Parchin military complex, a site where the IAEA suspects that weaponization activities have taken place. Instead, the IAEA and the world community will have to rely on Iran's own inspections of that site.

It is no surprise then that the majority of both chambers of Congress oppose the President's Iran proposal. But as of this week, 42 Senators, all Democrats, now support the proposal, which makes an override of the President's veto of our resolution of disapproval impossible. Thus, unless nine Senators change their votes, the proposal will go into effect.

It is noteworthy that even that minority of the Senate that has publicly supported the proposal has been tepid and unenthusiastic about it. Even Charles Schumer, among the most liberal of Senators, could not bring himself to support it.

If it does go into effect after all, what can we expect? We know that Iran will receive an influx of funding worth roughly half the size of their entire economy. We can expect that Iran will spend this money the same way they spend the money they have now: funding terrorism, intruding upon the sovereignty of Middle Eastern countries, and building up their military. In fact, with the arms embargo ended, Iran will likely have a lot of shopping to do. Even Vice President Biden conceded that this is "a totally legitimate argument" against the President's proposal.

We can expect that Iran will continue to attempt to dominate

its neighbors, funding the Houthi rebels in Yemen, Hezbollah terrorists in Lebanon, and *Shi'a* militia in Iraq that have killed American troops.

There is not a single shred of evidence in support of faith that Iran will change for the better as a result of this windfall.

We should conduct diplomacy, but not for diplomacy's sake. What the United States ultimately decides to do about the Islamic Republic of Iran will be the single most important foreign policy decision in the generation since the fall of Communism in 1989. I wish that I could support the proposed agreement, but under present circumstances I cannot.