

OPENING STATEMENT

Chairman Dodd and Ranking Member Shelby, thank you for moving forward with this important legislation. We are meeting at a critical time – for both the Administration’s efforts at engagement with Iran, and this Committee’s efforts to enhance the President’s leverage as he leads international efforts to pressure the Iranian regime.

Although Iran has agreed to allow International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors to access the recently-disclosed nuclear enrichment plant near Qum (KOOUM), plans to export 2,600 pounds of uranium for benign processing have yet to be officially agreed to by Tehran.

Our central goal today is unchanged: we must prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons. This issue is fundamentally important to the security of the United States. A nuclear-armed Iran would profoundly destabilize the region. It would present a threat to Europe, and also our allies in the Middle East, like Egypt and Jordan.

And, of course, Iran’s threats against our partner Israel have been unacceptable. Israel’s security as a Jewish democracy and ally is central

to our interests, and consonant with our highest ideals. To safeguard those interests, we need to preserve our flexibility to use all tools of national power and international coordination to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.

I have cosponsored the Bayh/Lieberman/Kyl Iran Refined Petroleum Sanctions Act, and I thank the senators for their fine work on this legislation, much of which has been included in today's bill. These sanctions could influence Iran's insular political decision-making, and help force the regime to reevaluate its cost-benefit analysis.

We need to be tough about this, but we also need to be smart. That means not taking the military option off the table. But it also means aggressively pursuing the tools of diplomacy – building coalitions of moderate Muslim states, European states, the Russians and the Chinese – to show the Iranians that not only are there consequences to inflammatory behavior, but benefits to conciliatory behavior as well.

The approach of non-engagement over the last eight years simply didn't work. The way to address ineffective diplomatic results is not to jettison diplomacy. I fully support President Obama's efforts to engage Iran directly. We must give this new strategy time to work. A serious effort to engage Iran will help justify to the international community the need

for further sanctions. Iran's fragile economy is susceptible to economic pressure. We should view that as an opportunity. Iran needs our capital and our purchasing power, whatever the ruling clergy might think of our system of governance and our culture. But if diplomacy fails, we must be prepared to act quickly. Today's markup is a responsible step forward in a comprehensive approach towards Iran.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.