



National Iranian American Council

Advancing the interests of the Iranian-American Community

The Iranian Digital Empowerment Act

This bill will enable average Iranian citizens to access the most powerful tool available for promoting democracy and civil society in Iran: information. It clarifies the intent of current US sanctions not to prohibit Americans from providing certain software or related services to Iranians, enabling them to communicate freely or bypass their government's online spying and censorship efforts.

SUMMARY

- **Authorizes the provision of certain software and related services to Iran:**
 - Tools that allow private Iranian citizens to circumvent online censorship and monitoring efforts imposed by the Government of Iran; and
 - Software and related services that enable the Iranian people to communicate with each other and the outside world.

ENSURING INTERNET FREEDOM FOR IRANIANS

- ❖ The Iranian people are utilizing tools like Twitter and Facebook to mobilize the first democratic movement of the digital media age.
- ❖ The Iranian government is using the Internet too--as a tool of repression, targeting online activities and cracking down on dissent.
- ❖ American tech companies could provide the Iranian people with the tools they need to continue their struggle; however, US sanctions do not allow for the provision of communications or anti-censorship software to Iran.
- ❖ Sanctions laws do include an exception for “information and informational materials” so that people under repressive regimes aren't prevented by US law from accessing news and information. However, this exception has not been updated since the mid-1990s and covers outdated mediums such as cassette tapes and telegraphs, not software or Internet services.
- ❖ In this classic case of the bureaucracy lagging behind the technology, companies like Microsoft and Google have actually cut off Iranians' access to popular instant messaging services, making it harder for the Iranian people to make their voices heard.

Congress must act swiftly to ensure US law does not continue to stand in the way of the Iranian people's struggle to have their voices heard. This bill brings US export regulations into the 21st Century, and corrects a small yet glaringly self-defeating aspect of America's Iran policy.