

JOHN LEWIS
5TH DISTRICT, GEORGIA

SENIOR CHIEF DEPUTY
DEMOCRATIC WHIP

COMMITTEE ON
WAYS AND MEANS

CHAIRMAN,
OVERSIGHT SUBCOMMITTEE

INCOME SECURITY
AND FAMILY SUPPORT



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1005

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
343 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-1005
(202) 225-3801
FAX: (202) 225-0951

DISTRICT OFFICE:
THE EQUITABLE BUILDING
100 PEACHTREE STREET, N.W.
SUITE # 1920
ATLANTA, GA 30303
(404) 659-0116
FAX: (404) 331-0947

July 17, 2008

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

The Honorable Condoleezza Rice
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. President and Madam Secretary:

Recent press reports have highlighted the administration's proposal for a more progressive dialogue with Iran. I write to commend and encourage these actions of diplomacy and engagement.

Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to travel to Vietnam as part of a congressional delegation led by Majority Leader Hoyer. As one who was active in the debate regarding the Vietnam War, I was inspired in seeing how much progress we have made in our relations despite our differences over recent decades. As you know, I am unilaterally opposed to any preemptive military strike, and the U.S. taking or supporting any other action that could inspire a violent response from Iran. For many years, I have stood with my congressional colleagues as a supporter of certain economic sanctions that are applied as a non-violent tool to aid the U.S. in diplomatic negotiations. I believe we can and must continue to pursue progress and peace with our global neighbors, as we have with Vietnam and as we have with North Korea. Progress can be made.

The decision to send the State Department's Political Affairs Under Secretary Burns to the nuclear meetings with Iran this weekend is significant. It is my hope that this action and his role in the meetings will yield progress to a more thorough review of the 5+1 proposal and an eventual Iranian disarmament process that is agreeable to the global community. Furthermore, I strongly support a multilateral diplomatic and collaborative effort with our international partners. It is critical that we pursue a parallel diplomatic effort to deescalate tensions with Iran and other regional leaders; we must be committed at all levels to prevent any sporadic violent action that could destabilize this ongoing and complicated process.

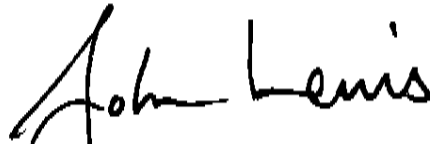
The reports of establishing a U.S. Interest Section in Iran are also encouraging. One of the most effective tools of diplomacy is people-to-people exchanges. Allowing young Iranians to learn about the America, her people, and her values first-hand are key to establishing a long-term strategy to improved relations and understanding between our people, not just our governments. The 9/11 Commission report included a key recommendation that we must

“rebuild the scholarship, exchange and library programs that reach out to young people and offer them knowledge and hope.”

In addition to supporting the adoption of bipartisan congressional legislation reinforcing this sentiment, I know that the administration shares this goal. Patricia Harrison, a former Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs, stated in congressional testimony that, “one of our greatest assets in public diplomacy is the American people themselves. Programs, that bring Americans and foreign citizens in direct contact, can and do have tremendous positive impact.” I hope that these exchanges will be a high priority and focus of U.S. policy going forward.

Please let me reiterate my support of recent diplomatic actions and appreciation of your attention to my concerns. I hope that we are turning over a new leaf of diplomacy and progress that will yield positive results in improving the progress of the Iranian disarmament talks, and the broader global image of our nation.

Sincerely,



John Lewis
Member of Congress