

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Ed Royce
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Hearing on “The Iran Nuclear Deal: Does It Further U.S. National Security?”
December 10, 2013**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

This hearing will come to order.

Today, the Committee will examine the interim nuclear agreement that the U.S. and five other nations reached with Iran last month. We welcome our Secretary of State, the Honorable John Kerry, to address the Committee’s questions and concerns regarding the Obama Administration’s plan.

Mr. Secretary, we appreciate you coming before the Committee. While we will debate how best to derail Tehran’s nuclear weapons program, I know you appreciate that it poses a grave threat to our national security. Congress has played a critical role in U.S. policy towards Iran, mainly by driving sanctions against the regime, including the Royce-Engel bill which passed the House by a vote of 400-20 this past summer, so we look forward to a constructive discussion today. These are high-stakes issues, but I am confident that the spirit of bipartisanship will prevail, as it typically does on this Committee. Again, welcome Mr. Secretary.

The key issue is whether a final agreement would allow Iran to manufacture nuclear fuel. Unfortunately, the interim agreement reads “yes,” it will. My concern is that we have bargained away our fundamental position, which is enshrined in six U.N. Security Council Resolutions -- that Iran should not be enriching and reprocessing -- in exchange for a false confidence that we can effectively check Iran’s misuse of these key nuclear bomb-making technologies. Just within the last few days, Iran has announced plans to press on and improve its centrifuge technology to enrich uranium. Meanwhile, days after the agreement, its Foreign Minister stated that Iran will continue construction at the Arak reactor, which will be capable of producing weapon-grade plutonium once operational. *What does this say about Iran’s intentions?*

Yes, I have heard the Administration using the “trust but verify” adage. But Iran aggressively supports terrorism and the most radical groups, engineers “Death to America” rallies, brutally represses its own people, and threatens our ally with extinction. It has a history of deceiving the international community about its nuclear program, and is pursuing a ballistic missile program in violation of U.N. Security Council Resolutions. Iran is *not just another country*. It simply can’t be trusted with enrichment technology, *because verification efforts can never be fool proof*. An agreement in which Iran purchases and returns spent nuclear fuel for energy generation is one thing, but allowing enrichment is too high risk, going beyond the lines of realistic international control.

There has been a lot of talk about whether Iran has the “right” to enrichment technology. This Committee has held several hearings on the Non-Proliferation Treaty over the years. It is clear

that Iran has *no* such right under that Treaty. And while I have heard the Administration say Iran has no right, it's a moot point if an agreement permits enrichment, giving Iran a de facto "right."

The proposed sanctions relief is another concern. The sanctions pressure that drove Iran to the negotiating table took years to build. While the interim agreement relief is limited, governments throughout the world will not be easily convinced to reverse course and ratchet-up sanctions pressure if Iran is only buying time with this agreement.

Moreover, companies have stayed away from Iran as much due to the atmosphere of international isolation as to the letter of any U.S. sanctions law. I fear that may now be lost. Foreign-based oil companies have jumped to start discussions with Iran. A *Wall Street Journal* headline last week read, "Iran Deal Opens Door for Businesses." We must counter that impression.

Sanctions have worked elsewhere. International sanctions pressure brought down the immoral apartheid regime in South Africa. That led to South Africa not only releasing Nelson Mandela from prison, but also abandoning its nuclear arsenal. A bipartisan coalition, from Newt Gingrich to John Kerry, supported these tough sanctions, even overriding a presidential veto. We are facing an immoral and very dangerous regime in Iran, one nearing a nuclear weapon. I am hard pressed to understand why we'd be letting up sanctions pressure at the very time its economy is on the ropes without getting an agreement which stops its centrifuges from spinning.

I will now turn to Ranking Member Engel for his opening statement.