

Congress of the United States

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REP. CAPPS' TIBET AMENDMENT PASSES TIES DALAI LAMA'S VISIT TO US POLICY

Washington, DC -- US Representative Walter Capps (D-Santa Barbara) today successfully offered an amendment to HR 1757, the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, concerning the deplorable situation in Tibet. This measure, which was resoundingly passed by a voice vote, focuses attention on the need to preserve Tibetan culture. Specifically, it directs the United States Information Agency (USIA) to include individuals active in preserving the culture, religion and language of Tibet in the existing Tibetan education and cultural exchanges administered by that agency.

"Beijing has single-mindedly implemented policies that have plundered and decimated monastic life, and forced change in the day-to-day traditions of the Tibetan people," Capps said on the House Floor. "The current Chinese policy toward Tibet may well end in relegating Tibetan culture and language to the history books, unless we make conscious efforts to support the preservation of this society."

The Capps amendment comes on the heels of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's visit to Santa Barbara, where he heralded the establishment of a chair in the study of Tibetan Buddhism at the University of California, Santa Barbara's Department of Religious Studies.

In his speech, Capps stated, "Last week, I helped UCSB celebrate the establishment of an academic chair for Tibetan studies. My own dedication to the study of religion is born of the belief that the world benefits immeasurably from a diversity of religious traditions. In Tibet, as in all places, religion and culture are inextricably intertwined, forming the glue that holds the people together. The annihilation of this unique civilization would be a grave loss to us all."

The Capps amendment affects existing USIA education and cultural exchange programs dealing with Tibet. HR 1757 authorizes \$500,000 of Federal funding to be appropriated in each Fiscal Year 1998 and 1999 for such exchanges with Tibet.

Capps' efforts to foster greater awareness of the Tibetan people were praised by House International Relations Committee Chairman Ben Gilman (R-NY) and Ranking Democrat Lee Hamilton (D-IN).

HR 1757 is currently pending on the House Floor.

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