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US foreign policy

US lawmakers set for Taipei visits in show of support for Taiwan

Trips will signal tacit backing by Washington for president-elect Lai Ching-te



Taiwan president-elect Lai Ching-te. A delegation of US officials is set to meet him there in the coming weeks © Ann Wang/Reuters

[Demetri Sevastopulo](#) in Washington and [Kathrin Hille](#) in Taipei 9 HOURS AGO

Several prominent US lawmakers will travel to Taipei in the coming weeks in a show of support for Lai Ching-te, who will be inaugurated as Taiwan’s new president in May following his election victory on Saturday.

Ami Bera, the top Democrat on the House foreign affairs Indo-Pacific subcommittee, and two other co-chairs of the Congressional Taiwan Caucus — Republicans Andy Barr and Mario Díaz-Balart — will visit Taiwan next week, according to people familiar with the trip.

Mike Gallagher, the influential Republican hawk who chairs the bipartisan House China committee, is expected to travel to [Taiwan](#) after the first delegation, in a visit that will be closely watched by Beijing.

[China](#) has criticised visits to the island by American political figures, arguing that they dilute the US “one China” policy under which Washington recognises Beijing as the sole government of China.

The Chinese embassy in Washington said Beijing “firmly opposes the US having any form of official interaction with Taiwan and interfering in Taiwan affairs in any way or under any pretext”.

“The US needs to exercise extreme prudence in handling Taiwan-related issues, and must not obscure and hollow out the one-China principle in any form or send any wrong signal to ‘Taiwan independence’ separatist forces,” the embassy said.

Members of Congress have a long history of travelling to Taiwan, which amounts to tacit shows of support from Washington given the US executive branch has only an unofficial relationship with Taipei under the “one China” policy, which has been in place since it switched diplomatic recognition to Beijing in 1979.

After then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan in 2022, the Chinese military conducted large-scale military exercises around the island and halted military exchanges with the US that were only restarted last week.

The White House last week sent two former top officials — former Republican national security adviser Stephen Hadley and former Democratic deputy secretary of state James Steinberg — to Taipei in the wake of the election. They joined Laura Rosenberger, head of the American Institute in Taiwan, the part of the US state department that manages unofficial relations with Taiwan, in meeting Lai and the losing candidates.

Bera and his co-chairs of the Taiwan caucus will meet Lai, but not the losing candidates, according to one person familiar with the planning.

House Speaker Mike Johnson said after Taiwan’s election that he would ask the Republican chairs of several committees to travel to Taiwan.

“To underscore the ongoing commitment of Congress to security and democracy, I will be asking the chairs of the relevant House committees to lead a delegation to Taipei following Lai’s inauguration in May,” Johnson said.

Gallagher declined to comment on his visit and whether he would be leading a China committee delegation. Bera did not comment. Barr and Díaz-Balart did not respond to a request for comment.

More congressional delegations are expected around the inauguration as well as in March or April to mark the 45th anniversary of the Taiwan Relations Act, the law that commits the US to provide defensive arms to Taiwan.

The TRA also describes any effort to determine the future of Taiwan by non-peaceful means as a threat to regional security and commits the US to maintain its own capacity to resist force that would jeopardise Taiwan’s security.

Analysts said China was likely to react more forcefully to visits by more prominent US lawmakers and view the TRA anniversary and the inauguration as more sensitive.

“China would certainly go mad over a delegation of [House] China committee members,” said James Chen, a foreign policy expert at Tamkang University in Taipei. “A visit by members of the Taiwan caucus would be less sensitive because many of them are not necessarily anti-China, while the China committee clearly treats China as a target.”

In Taiwan, US delegations are generally popular. But experts said it would be more in Taipei’s interest to focus on substantial exchanges with the US administration than “Instagram diplomacy”, which mainly satisfied society’s yearning for recognition.

“What we lack most is visits from US government officials or military officials,” Chen said.

The US generally refrains from sending senior officials to Taiwan. Beijing reacted angrily last year when Michael Chase, the top Pentagon official for China, visited Taipei in a secret visit that was reported on by the Financial Times.

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