

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0908

May 4, 2021

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

We write today to express our concern about Mongolia and what recent political developments may portend for the future of democracy in the country. As you know, Mongolia has been a remarkable democratic success story, particularly considering how it is precariously situated between two authoritarian neighbors, the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation, the former of which has expressed expansionist designs toward Mongolia in the past and may still harbor them.

The United States has an abiding interest in ensuring that democracy in Mongolia continues to flourish. Recent controversial actions taken by the parliament, the judiciary, and the president – including the hasty passage of an amendment to the Presidential Election Law that barred the incumbent from seeking reelection, the removal of a Constitutional Court judge seen as likely to challenge the constitutionality of the parliament's action, and the president's emergency appeal to the Supreme Court to disband the ruling party – have sparked a political crisis that could undermine the credibility of the presidential election on June 9.

In light of these developments, we respectfully urge the State Department to engage in dialogue with all political parties involved with the aim of deescalating the growing tensions between them, ensuring that no one is arbitrarily denied the standing to run for election and each political party has the right to nominate the candidate of their choice to appear on the presidential ballot, and encouraging the maintenance of an impartial judiciary. We further encourage you to work with USAID and consider funding a short-term international election observation team to document any attempts to deny the Mongolian people the ability to have their voices heard through the ballot box. Last minute changes to election laws risk undermining public confidence in the government and could give rise to instability.

In addition, we are concerned that this chain of events could make Mongolia increasingly vulnerable to the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) efforts to undermine Mongolia's democracy, rule of law, and its judicial system through corruption of and collusion with certain Mongolian leaders. In November 2016, following a visit by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the PRC punished Mongolia with economic sanctions. Tsend Munkh-Orgil, a politician serving as foreign minister, publicly supported Beijing's demand that Ulaanbaatar prohibit the Dalai Lama from ever visiting the country again. This was a shocking statement, as Tibetan Buddhism is

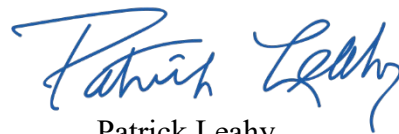
Mongolia's dominant religious tradition, and many Mongolians are devout followers of the Dalai Lama. In December 2017, Dashzeveg Amarbayasgalan, General Secretary of the ruling Mongolian People's Party (MPP), told a reporter in Beijing: "We are willing to go the next step to strengthen exchange and cooperation with the Chinese Communist Party and China...in order to work diligently toward building the community of common destiny for all mankind." The MPP General Secretary reportedly made similar comments on the MPP's centennial anniversary in March 2021, and several formal exchanges between the CCP and MPP have taken place in recent years involving the General Secretary and other senior MPP officials.

Democracy promotion must remain a core element of our foreign policy, particularly as authoritarian forces such as the CCP are working tirelessly to erode these values around the world. We look forward to working with you to find ways to strengthen U.S.-Mongolia relations and support democracy in Mongolia.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator



Patrick Leahy
U.S. Senator