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## **We must lead charge against Iran**

By Rep. Mike Kelly (R-Pa.) - 01/23/12 10:57 AM ET

In June 2009, hundreds of thousands of Iranians took to the streets to protest the re-election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, which opposition candidates and their supporters claimed was fraudulently won. It was the first time since the Islamic Revolution in 1979 that such large-scale protests took place, and the world watched closely as the beginnings of a democratic uprising in Iran appeared to take hold.

However, after thousands of arrests and nearly 100 deaths, the march toward freedom in Iran came to a crawl, and then to a halt, all within a matter of weeks. Unlike the uprisings during last year's Arab Spring, the United States remained neutral during the 2009 Persian Awakening, as it's been called, with President Obama arguing, "It's not productive given the history of U.S.-Iranian relations to be seen as meddling."

It took 30 years for the Iranian people to find themselves at a moment in history when they had the strength, in numbers and of will, to challenge the leadership in Iran. We do not know when that opportunity will come again, but when it does my hope is that the leadership in Washington will act with a clearer sense of conviction, and a keener sense of timing, than this administration did in 2009.

What we are facing now is an increasingly dangerous and defiant Iranian regime that's been emboldened by its ability to successfully suppress the will of its own people, with the entire world to see, and by the leader of the free world's political indifference toward the cause of freedom.

While Iran is getting closer than it's ever been to obtaining a nuclear weapon, the United

States has not taken the kind of leadership role our allies in the Middle East have looked to in the past, failing to enact the level of sanctions and build the type of coalition we need to stop Iran from becoming a nuclear power.

Last month, Congress passed and the president signed into law the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012 (NDAA), which contained new sanctions aimed at Iranian oil and financial interests. The NDAA's language regarding the sanctions was written with broad bipartisan, bicameral support, and was designed to cut off the Iranian financial and petroleum sectors that have funded Iran's nuclear ambitions, including the Central Bank of Iran and its foreign business partners. Only through such far-reaching measures can we truly isolate the regime, bleeding it of the resources that sustain its economy and are used to pacify and suppress its people.

The President must fully enforce sanctions on Iran as enacted by Congress in order to bring the strongest possible pressure on the Iranian regime. I will be watching the actions of the Obama Administration very closely, particularly by the Treasury Department, to ensure full enforcement of U.S. sanctions law.

We've seen what a non-nuclear Iran is capable of doing in terms of the regime's long record of human rights violations against its own people, acts of aggression against its neighbors, threats to disrupt the world's oil supply by blocking shipments through the Strait of Hormuz, involvement in sectarian conflicts throughout the Middle East, and its repeated vows to wipe Israel off the face of the map.

Now imagine the capabilities of a nuclear Iran. It is a vision that I hope, for the sake of the world, is never realized.

But we can't hope this threat away. We need to address it seriously, straightforwardly, and soon.

While the president is always reminding Congress that we can't wait to get certain things done, he seems to lack the same level of urgency when it comes to dealing with Iran.

We will never know what the world would be like today had the 2009 Iranian uprising led to a free and democratic Iran. But we do know what the world will be like tomorrow if Iran succeeds in getting a nuclear weapon, and it won't be good.

*Rep. Mike Kelly (R-Pa.) recently returned from a bipartisan delegation to the Middle East, led by Rep. Eric Cantor.*

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