

The Honorable Howard L. Berman
Prepared Remarks
Formosa Foundation Conference “Ensuring Free and Fair Elections: Taiwan 2012”
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I would like to thank the Formosa Foundation for inviting me here this morning to speak to you on the upcoming election in Taiwan. I'd also like to acknowledge the work of foundation's executive director, Ms. Terri Giles, for organizing this conference and for her work on Taiwan issues both here in Washington and in Los Angeles.

With the upcoming election in Taiwan now just over a month away, the people of Taiwan will once again exercise their democratic right to directly choose their president and legislative leaders. This election, like the ones that preceded it, symbolizes Taiwan's development over the last 60 years into a vibrant and flourishing multiparty democracy.

The foundation of America's ties with Taiwan is our common values and shared belief in democracy. I have been deeply impressed over the years by Taiwan's open and vibrant democratic society. I had a chance to meet with the two presidential candidates: President Ma when I visited Taiwan in 2009, and Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Chairwoman Tsai when she was in Washington this past September.

The United States fully supports the Taiwanese people's right to directly choose their leaders, free from coercion and carried out in a fair and transparent manner. There is no role in a democratic society for corrupt practices or political violence aimed at disrupting electoral choices. Nor should there be any external political intimidation or military threats from mainland China.

I am pleased to learn that an international committee, consisting of outside experts, has been created to draw attention to next month's election. The committee was formed by my good friend Li-Pei Wu to raise awareness in the international community about the importance of further enhancing Taiwan's democracy.

I want to be clear that it is not my place—nor Congress' or this Administration's place—to support or imply support for either Presidential candidate or political party in Taiwan in the upcoming election. As Assistant Secretary of State Kurt Campbell stated at a Committee hearing in October, the United States does not take sides in Taiwan's election.

I am a firm supporter of Taiwan's democracy. I want to assure you that the United States will respect the choice the Taiwanese people make next month and will continue to support them, no matter who is elected.

Following the election, the U.S. should quickly congratulate the winner of the presidential election in January, as both the Taiwan people and mainland Chinese government will be looking for Washington's reaction.

Some may be concerned that the four month transition period following the election and before the presidential inauguration in May could present some challenges to the process of a peaceful transfer of power between outgoing-President Ma and the incoming president-elect if DPP candidate Dr. Tsai were to win. We will be watching to see if Beijing tries to meddle in this process, either by pressuring the lame-duck administration for any concessions or taking a strident or hostile stance toward the incoming president.

Next month's election in Taiwan is not only important to the Taiwanese people, but also for the region and for the United States. Taiwan's example is an inspiration for other countries in Asia and throughout the world that linger under the control of one person or one party.

This election is yet another sign of the political maturity of the people of Taiwan and a signal to Beijing that a change in relations between Taiwan and China cannot be imposed by the mainland.

Again, my congratulations to the people of Taiwan.