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November 19, 2019

The Honorable Mike Pompeo
Secretary of State
United States Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

Thank you for being a strong voice for the defense of human rights during your time as Secretary of State. I am grateful for your leadership in advocating for freedom of expression, religion, and speech across the globe. As part of this focus, I would like to commend this Administration's efforts to expand internet access in countries burdened by censorship laws. Internet censorship is a barrier to the goal of internet freedom worldwide.

Unfortunately, we have seen a disturbing increase in internet censorship by foreign governments over the last year. From the continued suppression of internet access in China and Iran to new restrictions in Burma and Kashmir, the ability to communicate online is not available for millions of individuals who would greatly benefit from such access. All people deserve connectivity to this common resource. As the inventors of the internet, our nation should continue to lean in and lead this fight.

In light of the uptick in internet access suppression globally, I am pleased that the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs (SFOPS) increased the funding for Global Internet Programs in its appropriations bill for the 2020 fiscal year (FY20) to \$70,500,000. As you know, this is an increase of \$10,000,000 from the previous fiscal year. I support this increased investment to push back against restrictions on freedom of expression on the internet by authoritarian governments.

This increase in funding provides the State Department with an opportunity to expand access to the internet for millions of people – and push back against those who seek to suppress it. As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I would like to recommend that the Department use a greater portion of these dollars to invest in internet firewall circumvention tools. The imposition of firewall technology is one of the greatest barriers to internet access, which is why it is prudent to bolster and diversify our tools that enable individuals to bypass the censorship mechanisms that are preventing them from freely using the internet to access information or communicate.

Firewall circumvention tools will be particularly useful as a component of this Administration's maximum pressure campaign against Iran. This Administration has rightly imposed a variety of sanctions targeting various sectors of the Iranian economy. These efforts have been effective in isolating Tehran and pressuring its leaders as they pursue their nuclear ambitions.

Complicating matters domestically for President Rouhani and his country's leadership, the public sentiment of the Iranian people has been against the rogue ambitions of the regime. The Iranian people

aspire to join the global economy and participate in the democratic process. As you know, various protest movements have sprouted up in recent years in Iran, but they have failed to experience sustained success.

Firewall circumvention technology in Iran can be a powerful tool to empower the Iranian people to exercise their God-given rights of free speech and assembly. By taking steps to ensure the internet is accessible to the millions of Iranians who want it through firewall circumvention technology, our nation can continue its maximum pressure campaign against the Iranian regime. As part of the Department's increased investment in firewall circumvention technology, I encourage you to continue to prioritize programs in Iran.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I am grateful for your leadership in ensuring all people have access to an open, safe, and free internet so that information and ideas can be exchanged freely among peoples.

In God We Trust,



James Lankford
United States Senator