

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 6, 2025

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

Dear Secretary Rubio:

Since its inception in 1983, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), born from President Ronald Reagan, has promoted democracy globally. NED and its four core institutes, the Center for International Private Enterprise, the International Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute (NDI), and the Solidarity Center, have empowered democratic movements in the most vulnerable regions of the world.

Congress appropriates 95 percent of NED's direct democracy funding which has passed consistently on a bipartisan basis. Through its core institutes and congressional funding, NED provides grants to independent civil society and media to advance democratic principles. However, the Administration is withholding approximately \$239 million in congressional appropriation to NED. I urge you to immediately resume funding for NED so it can continue its critical work to promote freedom and democracy in the world's most repressive countries.

NED has maintained strong bipartisan support from Congress and previous Administrations due to its effective and transparent support for democracy activists and movements. When you were a United States Senator, you commended NED for "advance[ing] the cause of freedom and carry[ing] out the vision President Reagan articulated" during his Westminster Speech in 1982. NED has also maintained strong bipartisan support on its Board of Directors, many of which are now members of the Administration.

For decades, NED has stood on the frontlines alongside its grantees to overcome authoritarian regimes, efforts to curtail freedom of speech, and advocate for transparent and free elections and government processes. NED has effectively promoted democratic principles in Taiwan and countered the People's Republic of China's (PRC) aggressive influence. NED also provides grants to Free North Korea Radio (FNKR), a radio broadcasting network operated by brave North Korean refugees and defectors, to provide credible information to North Korea. Without NED's grants, FNKR will be unable to broadcast to North Korean civilians who rely on FNKR for hope, freedom, and strength. This halt in funding for NED risks the survival of nonprofit American organizations, local partners, and democracy defenders and will ultimately curtail U.S. efforts to counter Chinese, Iranian, North Korean, and Russian malign and authoritarian influence.

The U.S. Constitution codifies Congress's authority to appropriate funds and directs the Executive branch to implement such funding. Since January, NED has not been able to access congressionally appropriated funds from FY2020-FY2025 that should be available for drawdown through the U.S. State Department. All funding inquiries to the Department, which is mandated to administer NED funding through a simple pass-through mechanism, have gone unanswered.

For the first time in 41 years, NED is unable to meet its obligations to its grantees because their funding has been abruptly frozen.

NED has maintained robust bipartisan Congressional support for decades, thanks to its essential work to support global democracy partners, counter malign influence such as the PRC, and protect U.S. national security and economic interests. Its work to invest in helping people around the world defend and protect democracy is essential to American national security, strength, and prosperity. As NED faces this existential crisis, I urge you to reaffirm your support for NED and commitment to preserving democracy globally by immediately resuming funding for NED and its four core institutes.

Sincerely,



Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress