Talking Points

Women Against War Iran Project
Meeting with Senator Charles Schumer’s staff
July 25, 2013
(similar talking points were prepared for meetings with other elected representatives in 2013)

1. Need for direct negotiations for a grand bargain. With election of Iranian President-elect Hassan Rouhani in June, the opportunities have changed significantly.
- Missed opportunities of past
  In 2003, while it was cooperating with the U.S. in Afghanistan, Iran proposed a grand bargain that included its nuclear program and its support for militant groups in the region. President George Bush responded by branding Iran part of the “Axis of Evil.”
  In January 2013, with start of Obama’s new term and in preparation for new Iran and P5+1 nuclear discussions, the offer of the U.S. to negotiate directly was positive but was then undercut by additional, extreme sanctions and by military exercises in the Persian Gulf. (See New York Times, “How to Talk to Iran” by Seyed Hossein Mousavian and Mohammad Ali Shabani, January 3, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/04/opinion/how-to-talk-to-iran.html?_r=0).
- Opportunity to deal differently with President-elect Rouhani
  Considered a moderate, Rouhani campaigned on a platform of engaging with the world, promising to “pursue a policy of reconciliation and peace.”
  Dent-Price letter of July 19, 2013 to President Obama demonstrates unprecedented support for a diplomatic solution to the Iranian nuclear standoff. The 131 signatories include 17 Republicans, 6 members of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, and senior members of both the Democratic and Republican House leadership.
  July 15, 2013 letter from 29 prominent former government officials, diplomats, military officers, and national security experts to President Obama calls on him to pursue direct negotiations with Iran once the new president is inaugurated.
- Iran’s cooperation is very important in any efforts for Middle East regional peace and security

2. Impact of U.S. policy in Iran. Continued U.S. hostility toward Iran weakens the Iranian democracy movement. Sanctions are hurting ordinary Iranians and not changing the government’s nuclear position.
- February 2013: Woodrow Wilson Center report, “Sanctions and Medical Supply Shortages in Iran.”
- April 17, 2013: The Iran Project, “Strategic Options for Iran: Balancing Pressure with Diplomacy”

Both U.S. and Israeli military and intelligence leaders agree that military action against Iran would be a disaster and would be unlikely to destroy Iran’s nuclear program.

- March 12, 2013: testimony before Senate Intelligence Committee by Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, on annual Worldwide Threat Assessment.
- September 12, 2012: “Weighing Benefits and Costs of Military Action Against Iran” after 6 months of discussions and signed by a bipartisan group of nearly 3 dozen former U.S. diplomats, generals, and government officials.
- Senate Resolution 65, which passed the Senate May 22, 2013, concerns us because it ignored diplomatic options, called for stronger sanctions against Iran, and pre-approves U.S. participation in a “self-defense” Israeli attack on Iran.

**Our requests:**
- Please use your leadership in the Senate to give the president flexibility to reduce and remove sanctions against Iran as part of a negotiated grand bargain.
- Please strongly oppose any military action against Iran.
- Please support efforts in the Senate similar to the House of Representatives’ Dent-Price letter to the president.
- Please support legislation in the Senate similar to Representative Barbara Lee’s Diplomacy with Iran bill, HR 783, which eliminates the “no contact” policy for State Department employees in addition to providing for a special envoy to Iran.
- Please oppose:
  - S 892, Iran Loophole Elimination Act, sponsored by Senators Kirk and Manchin. We understand that Senator Schumer is a co-sponsor, but we ask that he reconsider in view of the changed political atmosphere.
  - S 965, Iran Sanctions Implementation Act, sponsored by Senator Inhofe. We appreciate that Senator Schumer is not a co-sponsor.
  - S 1001, Iran Export Embargo Act, sponsored by Senators Cornyn and Kirk. We appreciate that Senator Schumer is not a co-sponsor.