

HJR

36

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Interim:
P.O. Box 109
Wrangell, AK 99929
Phone: (907) 874-3088
Fax: (907) 874-3055

Session:
State Capitol, Room 108
Juneau, AK 99801-1182
Phone: (907) 465-3824
1-800-686-3824
Fax: (907) 465-3175

**REPRESENTATIVE PEGGY WILSON
HOUSE DISTRICT 2**

SPONSOR STATEMENT HJR 36 "Taiwan: World Health Assembly"

The World Health Organization (WHO) was created as a way to promote to the highest possible level the general health and wellbeing of all people in the world. This Resolution urges the U.S. Congress to endorse Taiwan's efforts to become an Observer at the World Health Assembly (WHA). This would allow Taiwan to have immediate firsthand information that they can use to promote the health of their people, as well as contribute to international health activities supported by WHO. With a population of 23 million, there is an appropriate need for Taiwan to be included as an Observer to these vital discussions.

SARS and the current strain of avian influenza originated in the East Asian region of the world and threatens the health of all people, regardless of political borders. The information that Taiwan could gather from the World Health Assembly could allow further information, identification, and prevention of more widespread outbreaks of these two potentially pandemic diseases. The strides and achievements that Taiwan has made in the fields of public health can be enhanced by their admission as an Observer to the World Health Organization.

I ask for your support of HJR 36 to encourage the World Health Assembly's acceptance of Taiwan as an Official Observer.

FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA
2006 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Fiscal Note Number: 1
 Bill Version: HJR 36
 () Publish Date: _____

Revision Date/Time (Note if correction): _____ Dept. Affected: _____
 Title Taiwan: World Health Assembly RDU _____
 Component _____
 Sponsor Representative Peggy Wilson
 Requester House Health Education & Social Services Component No. _____

Expenditures/Revenues (Thousands of Dollars)

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below.

OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012
Personal Services	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Travel	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Contractual	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Supplies	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Equipment	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Land & Structures	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Grants & Claims	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Miscellaneous	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
TOTAL OPERATING	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

CAPITAL EXPENDITURES	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
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CHANGE IN REVENUES ()	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
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FUND SOURCE (Thousands of Dollars)

1002 Federal Receipts	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1003 GF Match	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1004 GF	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1005 GF/Program Receipts	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1037 GF/Mental Health	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other (Specify Type--Do not abbreviate)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
TOTAL	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Estimate of any current year (FY2006) cost: 0.0
 Check this box (X) if funding for this bill is included in the Governor's FY 2007 budget proposal:

POSITIONS

Full-time	0	0	0	0	0	0
Part-time	0	0	0	0	0	0
Temporary	0	0	0	0	0	0

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

Prepared by: Linda Miller Phone 465-3759
 Division House HESS Committee Aide Date/Time 4/18/06 8:00 AM
 Approved by: Representative Peggy Wilson Date 4/18/2006
 Agency Chair, House HESS Committee

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Office of the Spokesman

Washington, DC

March 20, 2002

[Taken Question from March 20, 2002 Daily Press Briefing](#)

Taiwan: Senate Bill on Observer Status at the World Health Organization

Question: What is the State Department's view on the Senate's adoption of HR 2739, a bill to authorize the Department to initiate a plan to endorse and obtain observer status for Taiwan at the May 13-17 World Health Assembly?

Answer: The Department supports the overall goal of Taiwan's participation in the work of the World Health Organization (WHO) and has long worked closely with Taiwan authorities to advance that objective. We have urged the World Health Organization and its members to find appropriate ways for Taiwan to participate. We will continue to do so.

U.S. policy is to support Taiwan's membership in international organizations where statehood is not an issue. In those organizations in which it cannot be a member, we support finding ways for Taiwan's voice to be heard.

Released on March 20, 2002

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United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

JAN 27 2006

Dear Mr. Andrews:

Thank you for your letter of December 16, 2005 regarding Taiwan's participation in international efforts to combat avian influenza.

Consistent with our close but unofficial relations with Taiwan, the U.S. Government has made every effort to include Taiwan in the international battle against highly pathogenic avian influenza and a potential influenza pandemic. We have engaged with representatives from Taiwan in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum – where Taiwan, as a member, has participated fully in a number of meetings on the subject – and have supported Taiwan's bid to obtain observer status in the World Health Assembly. With strong U.S. backing, Taiwan was able to send its CDC director, Steve Kuo, and other experts to represent Taiwan at WHO meetings on avian influenza in Geneva (November 7-9, 2005) and in Tokyo (January 12-13, 2006). Regrettably, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs rebuffed our attempts to include Taiwan at this week's International Pledging Conference on Avian and Human Pandemic Influenza in Beijing, maintaining that only foreign states, multilateral organizations and NGOs would be invited.

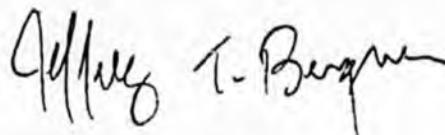
Regarding the International Partnership on Avian and Pandemic Influenza (IPAPI), the Department of State determined that the Partnership could most effectively meet U.S. objectives by ensuring the participation of countries most affected by avian influenza, including the People's Republic of China. However, the United States ensures that Taiwan is fully briefed on all Partnership activities, and we cooperate with Taiwan to identify other areas in which Taiwan can bring its considerable public health resources to bear in the fight against pandemic influenza.

The Honorable
Robert E. Andrews,
House of Representatives.

The U.S. Government will continue to support Taiwan's participation in key international meetings dedicated to fighting avian influenza and to engage with Taiwanese officials through bilateral meetings and workshops. Events such as a meeting between senior staff members of HHS and Steve Kuo to discuss continuing U.S.-Taiwan cooperation on influenza research, as well as a workshop currently under discussion on poultry farming and veterinary aspects of avian influenza to be sponsored jointly by USDA/APHIS and Taiwan's quarantine authorities, attest to the ongoing nature of our commitment.

We share your resolve to ensure that Taiwan is included in the international effort to halt the spread of highly pathogenic avian influenza. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of further assistance in this or any other matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey T. Bergner". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Jeffrey T. Bergner
Assistant Secretary
Legislative Affairs

Dr. Lee Jong-wook

January 30, 2006

Director General, WHO

Avenue Appia 20

1211 Geneva 27

Switzerland

Dear Director General Lee:

We hope that this letter finds you and your staff well as you face a variety of global health concerns, including avian flu. The current prospect of an avian flu epidemic merits the full involvement of the entire international community. It also serves as another forceful reason for Taiwan's meaningful and effective participation in the activities of the World Health Organization.

The avian flu has struck China and Southeast Asian countries, including Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia. Commerce between Taiwan and its neighboring countries puts it at risk for importing the virus from an infected area. Taiwan currently employs more than 300,000 foreign workers from Southeast Asia. In 2004, 1.5 million Taiwanese people visited Southeast Asian countries while a half million people from Southeast Asia visited Taiwan. Almost 4 million people from Taiwan visit China annually. Taiwan is also an important transit point for migratory birds, which are the main carriers of the avian flu virus. Approximately one million migratory birds annually pass through Taiwan or reside in Taiwan during the winter season.

Taiwan has thus far been free of the H5N1 strain of the avian flu virus, but is seriously at risk. A less virulent strain of avian flu, H7N3, was found in the droppings of migratory birds in Taiwan. Further, on October 14, 2005, a vessel from China was discovered with 1,037 smuggled pet birds on board. Among the 46 birds randomly selected for tests, 8 were found H5N1 positive. The consequences are unthinkable if the vessel had not been discovered in time.

Taiwan has taken measures to combat bird flu within its borders, but effective efforts will require the engagement of the entire region and the world. It is disturbing that Taiwan has not been given full access to the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN), the Global Influenza Program (GIP), the Global Early Warning and Response System (GLEWS), and the Global Influenza Surveillance System (GISN).

Diseases know no borders. Taiwan cannot afford to be the missing link in this international battle against the avian flu. Even more importantly, the global community cannot afford to leave Taiwan out.

We in the US Congress have passed numerous resolutions supporting Taiwan's WHO participation, and the US government is on record in support of Taiwan's WHO observer status.

We sincerely hope that you will show the leadership necessary to advance this matter. And we will pay close attention to WHO actions in this regard.

Sincerely,

HENRY HYDE

TOM LANTOS

Chairman

Ranking Democratic Member

駐西雅圖台北經濟文化辦事處
Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Seattle

2001 Sixth Avenue, Suite 2410
Seattle, Washington 98121
Tel (206) 441-4586 Fax : (206) 441-4320

March 28, 2002

The Honorable Brian Porter
Speaker of the House
State of Alaska
716 W. 4th Suite 300
Anchorage, AK 99501-2133

Dear Speaker Porter:

I am writing to solicit your support for Taiwan's participation in the annual summit of the World Health Assembly (WHA), the highest decision-making body of the World Health Organization (WHO), in May 2002 in Geneva, Switzerland.

Taiwan has made substantial achievements in the field of public health and has demonstrated a willingness to provide technical and financial assistance to international aid and health activities supported by the WHO. During the last seven years, Taiwan has contributed \$100 million to 78 countries. A WHO membership is vital to Taiwan since it will gain access to the latest information on epidemics and diseases. While Taiwan has been able to indirectly acquire health information, it is often a case of "too little, too late." For instance, the deaths of those 80 children in Taiwan in 1998 might have been prevented with early-warning reports. To prevent such a tragedy from ever recurring, Taiwan would like to participate in the WHO, even only as an observer.

To echo Taiwan's bid for observer status at the WHA, US House of Representatives passed a bill, H.R. 2739, in December 2001 urging the US to push for Taiwan's participation in the coming WHA annual conference in May 2002. A bill, identical to the one adopted by the House, was unanimously passed by the U.S. Senate on March 19, 2002.

駐西雅圖台北經濟文化辦事處
Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Seattle

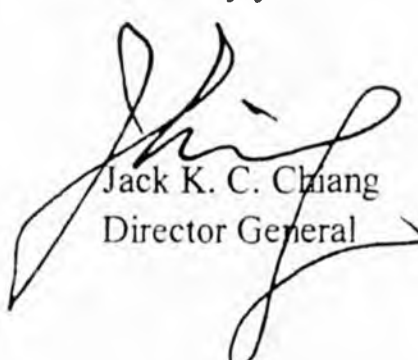
2001 Sixth Avenue, Suite 2410
Seattle, Washington 98121
Tel (206) 441-4586 Fax : (206) 441-4320

Indeed, support for Taiwan's participation in the WHO is fairly strong in the United States. For instance, the Nevada State Legislature, South Carolina State Legislature and Georgia State House of Representatives have already passed resolutions supporting for Taiwan's WHO bid. Considering the fact that the state of Alaska and Taiwan are enjoying an amicable and beneficial relationship, I hereby respectfully urge you to show your support for Taiwan's participation in the upcoming WHA annual conference by passing a resolution. If you think there is no possibility to propose a resolution for now, I hope you can write letters to President Bush, Secretary of State Colin Powell and Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson to push for Taiwan's bid, preferably with endorsement by your colleagues.

Enclosed please find the bill H.R. 2739 and the resolutions passed by Nevada, South Carolina and Georgia State Legislature for your reference. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. Thank you for your great support. I look forward to hearing from you.

With best regards,

Sincerely yours,


Jack K. C. Chiang
Director General

Calendar No. 330

107TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION**H. R. 2739**

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

DECEMBER 20 (legislative day, DECEMBER 18), 2001

Received; read twice and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

MARCH 19, 2002

Reported by Mr. BIDEN, without amendment

AN ACT

To amend Public Law 107-10 to authorize a United States plan to endorse and obtain observer status for Taiwan at the annual summit of the World Health Assembly in May 2002 in Geneva, Switzerland, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 SECTION 1. AMENDMENTS TO PUBLIC LAW 107-10.

4 (a) FINDINGS.—Section 1(a) of Public Law 107-10
5 (115 Stat. 17) is amended by adding at the end the fol-
6 lowing:

1 “(12) On May 11, 2001, President Bush stated
2 in his letter to Senator Murkowski that the United
3 States ‘should find opportunities for Taiwan’s voice
4 to be heard in international organizations in order to
5 make a contribution, even if membership is not pos-
6 sible’, further stating that his Administration ‘has
7 focused on finding concrete ways for Taiwan to ben-
8 efit and contribute to the WHO.’.

9 “(13) On May 16, 2001, as part of the United
10 States delegation to the World Health Assembly
11 meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, Secretary of Health
12 and Human Services Tommy Thompson announced
13 to the American International Club the Administra-
14 tion’s support of Taiwan’s participation in the activi-
15 ties of the WHO.”.

16 (b) PLAN.—Section 1(b)(1) of Public Law 107-10
17 (115 Stat. 17) is amended by striking “May 2001” and
18 inserting “May 2002”.

 Passed the House of Representatives December 19,
2001.

Attest:

JEFF TRANDAHL,
Clerk.

107TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 428

AN ACT

Concerning the participation of Taiwan in the World Health
Organization.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 SECTION 1. CONCERNING THE PARTICIPATION OF TAIWAN
2 IN THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION
3 (WHO).

4 (a) FINDINGS.—The Congress makes the following
5 findings:

6 (1) Good health is a basic right for every citizen
7 of the world and access to the highest standards of
8 health information and services is necessary to help
9 guarantee this right.

10 (2) Direct and unobstructed participation in
11 international health cooperation forums and pro-
12 grams is therefore crucial for all parts of the world,
13 especially with today's greater potential for the
14 cross-border spread of various infectious diseases
15 such as AIDS.

16 (3) Taiwan's population of 23 500,000 people is
17 larger than that of $\frac{3}{4}$ of the member states already
18 in the World Health Organization (WHO).

19 (4) Taiwan's achievements in the field of health
20 are substantial, including one of the highest life ex-
21 pectancy levels in Asia, maternal and infant mor-
22 tality rates comparable to those of western countries,
23 the eradication of such infectious diseases as chol-
24 era, smallpox, and the plague, and the first to be rid
25 of polio and to provide children with free hepatitis
26 B vaccinations.

1 (5) The United States Centers for Disease Con-
2 trol and its Taiwan counterpart agencies have en-
3 joyed close collaboration on a wide range of public
4 health issues.

5 (6) In recent years Taiwan has expressed a will-
6 ingness to assist financially and technically in inter-
7 national aid and health activities supported by the
8 WHO.

9 (7) On January 14, 2001, an earthquake, reg-
10 istering between 7.6 and 7.9 on the Richter scale,
11 struck El Salvador. In response, the Taiwanese gov-
12 ernment sent 2 rescue teams, consisting of 90 indi-
13 viduals specializing in firefighting, medicine, and
14 civil engineering. The Taiwanese Ministry of Foreign
15 Affairs also donated \$200,000 in relief aid to the
16 Salvadoran Government.

17 (8) The World Health Assembly has allowed ob-
18 servers to participate in the activities of the organi-
19 zation, including the Palestine Liberation Organiza-
20 tion in 1974, the Order of Malta, and the Holy See
21 in the early 1950's.

22 (9) The United States, in the 1994 Taiwan Pol-
23 icy Review, declared its intention to support Tai-
24 wan's participation in appropriate international or-
25 ganizations.

1 (10) Public Law 106-137 required the Sec-
2 retary of State to submit a report to the Congress
3 on efforts by the executive branch to support Tai-
4 wan's participation in international organizations, in
5 particular the WHO.

6 (11) In light of all the benefits that Taiwan's
7 participation in the WHO can bring to the state of
8 health not only in Taiwan, but also regionally and
9 globally, Taiwan and its 23,500,000 people should
10 have appropriate and meaningful participation in the
11 WHO.

12 (b) PLAN.—The Secretary of State shall initiate a
13 United States plan to endorse and obtain observer status
14 for Taiwan at the annual week-long summit of the World
15 Health Assembly in May 2001 in Geneva, Switzerland,
16 and shall instruct the United States delegation to Geneva
17 to implement that plan.

18 (c) REPORT.—Not later than 14 days after the date
19 of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State shall

- 1 submit a written report to the Congress in unclassified
- 2 form containing the plan required under subsection (b).

Passed the House of Representatives April 24, 2001.

Attest:

Clerk.

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT

TAIWAN
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION
OBSERVER STATUS CANDIDATE

TAIWAN
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION
OBSERVER STATUS CANDIDATE



- DISEASE KNOWS NO BORDERS
- TAIWANS CONTRIBUTIONS
- 23 MILLION PEOPLE AT RISK
- ENTRY TO THE WHO IS URGENT
- BENEFITS TO INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY
- SHOW YOUR SUPPORT

DISEASE KNOWS NO BORDERS

The World Health Organization is the United Nations organization for health. Taiwan has been excluded from this organization for over three decades, during which, the problems of globally orientated disease have become increasingly serious.



A recent amendment to the WHO constitution stresses on the point universal application. If all humans are to be considered, Taiwan must be included in the World Health Organization.

NAME:

NATIONALITY:

EMAIL:

Sign Petition

Good health is a fundamental right of all humans and the basis of developing a high quality of life. Taiwan has a population of over 23 million, greater than over three quarters of current WHO member states. This population requires access to the latest disease outbreak information and other assistance provided to WHO member states. In return, Taiwan has much to offer the international community.

Diseases do not recognize borders, nor can they differentiate between WHO member states and non-WHO members.



TAIPEI TIMES

Published on TaipeiTimes

<http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2006/03/15/2003297488>

Editorial: Grant Taiwan WHO observer status

Wednesday, Mar 15, 2006, Page 8

Last week, the World Health Organization's (WHO) official Web site, which includes Taiwan as part of China, mistakenly showed Taiwan as being affected by bird flu. After protests from Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and members of the US Congress, the WHO on Monday distinguished between Taiwan and China, and excluded Taiwan from the infected area on its map.

That the WHO corrected the mistake immediately, pushing aside political considerations, testifies to the organization's professional attitude, and deserves praise. But the incident is yet another warning to Taiwan and the international community. To avoid similar incidents in the future, Taiwan should work to gain the right to attend the World Health Assembly (WHA) in May. The WHO should stop procrastinating and allow Taiwan observer status.

If the WHO had not made the prompt corrections, Taiwan would have been listed as a bird flu-infected area, dealing a serious blow to the tourism, trade and animal foods industries -- despite the fact that not one instance of bird flu has been discovered here. It would also have damaged Taiwan's international image and intensified pressure on the nation's health authorities and the psychological pressure on the general public. This highlights the difference in interests between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait.

Although China claims that Taiwan is part of its territory, border restrictions between the countries remain in place, and the exchange of people, air traffic and goods between the two sides is more strictly controlled than between other countries. The disease prevention measures on each side of the Taiwan Strait are separate, and there are also clear differences in the quality of these measures. Political issues should not be confused with public health issues.

With the whole world under the threat of bird flu, excluding Taiwan from the international network to prevent the spread of infectious diseases may well make it the weak link in the disease prevention chain. This violates the Taiwanese people's fundamental right to medical information. It also weakens the international health network. With Taiwan located so close to China, an area affected by bird flu, the WHO should bolster disease prevention measures by allowing Taiwan to participate in technical discussions. This would prevent a repeat of the SARS crisis, during which Taiwan stood alone.

The WHO's international contagious disease report and response mechanism still excludes Taiwan. Although we can obtain the information via a third party such as the US, direct access to such information from the WHO would be more efficient and reduce the time lag, helping Taiwan to fulfill its responsibility to put in place preventive measures.

Last year, Taiwan strongly supported the addition of the words "universal application" to the International Health Regulations. Last year China also signed a memorandum of understanding with the WHO agreeing to the principle that preventive measures against epidemics have no national boundaries. It also agreed to Taiwan's participation in an avian flu conference in Tokyo. Nevertheless, it barred Taiwan from a similar conference held in Beijing. A country that shows such enmity to Taiwan should not be allowed to become its guardian.

The WHO's basic function is to guarantee global health, and it should operate on the basis of professionalism and international cooperation. Its considerations should exclude political questions such as national sovereignty and focus on health matters. It should therefore grant Taiwan observer status.

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Home >In Focus >More Issues

Latest WHO Bid Gets Support In Washington

Several members of both the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate recently tabled bills that would authorize the secretary of state to propose a resolution on the floor of the forthcoming World Health Assembly (WHA) in support of Taiwan's latest bid to participate in that conference as an observer.

On Feb. 10, Co-chair of the Congressional Taiwan Caucus (CTC) Rep. Sherrod Brown led three other members of the pro-Taiwan group--Reps. Steve Chabot, Robert Wexler and Dana Rohrabacher--in introducing H.R. 3793, a bill concerning Taiwan's participation in the World Health Organization (WHO).

Established in April 2002, the CTC explores ways of strengthening U.S.-Taiwan relations in accordance with the Taiwan Relations Act. The group presently consists of 126 members from the House of Representatives.

"The secretary of state is authorized to initiate a United States plan to endorse and obtain observer status for Taiwan at the annual week-long summit of the World Health Assembly in May 2004 in Geneva, Switzerland; to instruct the United States delegation to Geneva to implement that plan; and to introduce a resolution in support of observer status for Taiwan at the summit of the World Health Assembly," reads the bill, which was referred to the Committee on International Relations.

It was the first time that a bill was introduced to authorize such a resolution at the WHA. The previous bills, tabled annually since 1999, merely urged the secretary of state to develop a strategy to help Taiwan secure observer status at the health summit, and U.S. representatives generally accomplished this by speaking in favor of the island nation on the sidelines of the assembly.

"Good health is important to every citizen of the world," the bill reads, adding that access to the highest standards of medical information and services, and participation in international health-related events, is important for the enhancement of public health.

Taiwan is denied entry into the world health body largely due to obstruction from China. This is despite the increasing risk of cross-border infection by severe epidemics, as evidenced by last year's outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), which started in China and spread throughout the world, causing 73 deaths in Taiwan alone. This year the island nation is being threatened by the outbreak of avian flu now ravaging much of Asia.

"The SARS and avian influenza outbreaks illustrate that disease knows no boundaries and emphasize the importance of allowing all people access to the WHO," the bill reads. "As the pace of globalization quickens and the spread of infectious disease accelerates, it is critical that all people, including the people of Taiwan, be given the opportunity to participate in international health organizations such as the WHO." The bill referred to Taiwan's achievements in the field of health as "substantial." Those mentioned in the statement included one of the highest life expectancy levels in Asia, the eradication of cholera and smallpox, and becoming the continent's first country to wipe out polio and provide children with hepatitis B vaccinations.

The bill also cited Taiwan's contribution to the world community as one reason the island democracy and its people deserve "appropriate and meaningful participation in the WHO." For example, Taiwan sent two rescue teams consisting of 90 members specializing in firefighting, medicine and civil engineering to El Salvador after a devastating earthquake hit the Central American country in January 2001.

In addition to donating US\$200,000 in aid to the Salvadoran government, Taipei also pledged US\$1 million to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria in December 2002 in response to an appeal from the United Nations and the United States for resources to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS, the bill said.

Two days after the introduction of the bill in the House of Representatives, Sen. George Allen, co-chair of the Senate Taiwan Caucus, led 10 senators in introducing a similar bill numbered S. 2092 in the Senate. "It would be tantamount to medical malpractice to continue to exclude Taiwan from participation in the assessment, treatment and cure of SARS and other dangerous diseases in the world," opined Allen.

The government of Taiwan began pushing for participation in the WHO as an observer in 1997 with a view to

safeguarding the health and well-being of its people, despite China's efforts to block this. However, most countries that do business with the communist giant have adopted a "one China" policy, which makes Taiwan's continued efforts to obtain observer status extremely difficult in the absence of worldwide backing.

To sidestep the thorny "one China" problem and thus avoid the sovereignty dispute with China, Taiwan started two years ago promoting the idea of joining the world body as a "health entity." According to Deputy Foreign Minister Michael Kau, who devised the strategy, there are already precedents for non-state entities becoming WHA observers. Palestine and the Order of Malta, for example, are considered "quasi-state entities," while the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies enjoy observer status as "nongovernmental organizations." Although Taiwan's efforts have thus far been in vain, its never-say-die spirit has gradually evoked some response. In recent years, a few governments and international medical bodies, including the European Parliament and Japan, have voiced their support.

On May 11, 2001, U.S. President George W. Bush stated in a letter to Sen. Lisa Murkowski that the United States "should find opportunities for Taiwan's voice to be heard in international organizations in order to make a contribution, even if membership is not possible," adding that his administration has "focused on finding concrete ways for Taiwan to benefit and contribute to the WHO." The Commission of the World Medical Association (WMA) passed a resolution in October 2001 calling on the WHO to grant Taiwan observer status. Likewise, the E.U. Parliament passed a similar resolution the following March, urging the commission and member states to support Taiwan's bid for WHA participation. The E.U. resolution reads, in part, "Taiwan's experience in dealing successfully with important health issues at home can be of benefit not only regionally but also globally." "America's work for a healthy world cuts across political lines. That is why my government supports Taiwan's efforts to gain observership status at the World Health Assembly," indicated Tommy Thompson, secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, in a speech at the WMA in May 2002. "We know this is a controversial issue, but we do not shrink from taking a public stance on it. The people of Taiwan deserve the same level of public health as citizens of every nation on Earth, and we support them in their efforts to achieve it," he said.

The U.S. health secretary also voiced support of Taiwan at an official WHA meeting last May. "The need for effective public health exists among all peoples. That's why the United States has strongly supported Taiwan's inclusion in efforts against SARS and beyond," said Thompson in a speech at the assembly's second plenary session. "If we are truly serious about stopping this disease in its tracks, then we cannot ignore millions of people who are at risk. One lesson of SARS is that public health knows no borders--and no politics."

Source: GIO(2004/03/24 17:05:35)

Find this article at: <http://english.www.gov.tw//e-Gov/index.jsp?catid=18&recordid=52681>