HON. RON PAUL OF TEXAS Before the U.S. House of Representatives June 20, 2006
Dialogue is Key to Dealing With Iran

I am encouraged by recent news that the Administration has offered to put an end to our 26 year old policy of refusing to speak with the Iranians.

While this is a positive move, I am still concerned about the pre-conditions set by the administration before it will agree to begin talks. Unfortunately, the main U.S. pre-condition is that the Iranians abandon their uranium enrichment program. But this is exactly what the negotiations are meant to discuss! How can a meaningful dialogue take place when one side demands that the other side abandon its position before talks can begin? Is this offer designed to fail so as to clear the way for military action while being able to claim that diplomacy was attempted? If the administration wishes to avoid this perception, it would be wiser to abandon pre-conditions and simply agree to talk to Iran.

By demanding that Iran give up its uranium enrichment program, the United States is unilaterally changing the terms of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation treaty. We must remember that Iran has never been found in violation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. UN inspectors have been in Iran for years, and International Atomic Energy Agency Director ElBaradei has repeatedly reported that he can find no indication of diversion of source or special nuclear materials to a military purpose.

As a signatory of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, Iran has, according to the Treaty, the “inalienable right” to the “development research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination.” Yet the United States is demanding that Iran give up that right even though after years of monitoring Iran has never been found to have diverted nuclear material from peaceful to military use.

As my colleagues are well aware, I am strongly opposed to the United Nations and our participation in that organization. Every Congress I introduce a bill to get us out of the UN. But I

also recognize problems with our demanding to have it both ways. On one hand, we pretend to abide by the UN and international law, such as when Congress cited the UN in its resolution authorizing the president to initiate war with Iraq. On the other hand, we feel free to completely ignore the terms of treaties - and even unilaterally demand a change in the terms of treaties - without hesitation. This leads to an increasing perception around the world that we are no longer an honest broker, that we are not to be trusted. Is this the message we really want to send at this critical time?

Some may argue that it does not matter whether the US operates under double standards. We are the lone super-power and can do as we wish, they argue. But this is a problem of the rule of law. Are we a nation that respects the rule of law? What example does it set for the rest of the world - including rising powers like China and Russia - when we change the rules of the game whenever we see fit? Won't this come back to haunt us?

We need to remember that decision-making power under Iran's government is not all concentrated in the president. We are all familiar with the inflammatory rhetoric of President Ahmadinejad, but there are other governmental bodies in Iran that are more moderate and eager for dialogue. We have already spent hundreds of billions of dollars on a war in the Middle East. We cannot afford to continue on the path of conflict over dialogue and peaceful resolution. Unnecessarily threatening Iran is not in the US interest and is not in the interest of world peace.