

# U.S. Rep. Steil: Don't take our eyes off Iran

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**JANESVILLE, WISCONSIN**—Today in the [Washington Examiner](#), Bryan Steil highlighted the need to continue putting pressure on Iran as the world fights the coronavirus pandemic. Earlier this year, Steil introduced the [Stop Evasion of Iran Sanctions Act](#), which gives the U.S. Secretary of the Treasury critical tools to prevent European companies from avoiding U.S. sanctions by inappropriately trading with Iran through a backchannel known as INSTEX.

## [Rep. Bryan Steil: Don't take our eyes off Iran](#)

Iran's leaders hope that the global battle against COVID-19 will allow their actions to go unchecked. But they cannot be trusted, and we must take action.

Iran is using the coronavirus pandemic to work to avoid our sanctions. I have a plan to stop that if we act now.

Iran is the world's largest state sponsor of terrorism. The Iranian regime threatens the United States and our allies and destabilizes the Middle East. As we've seen just earlier this year, Iran shot 15 ballistic missiles at U.S. service members stationed in Iraq. This type of aggression must not be tolerated.

Now they are working to avoid U.S. financial sanctions. That's why I introduced the Stop Evasion of Iran Sanctions Act to hold Iran accountable. If Europe chooses to prop up Iran, it would hold that region accountable too.

President Trump rightfully pulled the U.S. out of the Obama administration's flawed Iran nuclear deal. After years of ineffective policies failing to stop Iran's power grab, Trump implemented a maximum pressure campaign against the regime. The administration's actions have had crippling effects on Iran. Very importantly, last

fall, Trump placed new sanctions on Iran's Central Bank, Iran's National Development Fund, and Etemad Tejarat Pars, which finances terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah.

A major part of our maximum pressure campaign against Iran is our targeted sanctions. Through sanctions, the U.S. weakens Iran's ability to build up its nuclear power and cuts off vital resources.

While it is clear that the U.S. is committed to preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, the same cannot be said of our European allies.

The European Union chooses to disregard Iran's malicious and terrorist activities in order to prop up its own economy. Rather than cutting off their financial support of Iran, the EU has created a back channel, INSTEX, to do business with Iran and circumvent U.S. sanctions. For more than a year, the U.S. has been watching the EU to see if and how they use INSTEX to prop up Iran's economy.

My bill ensures the U.S. can sanction Europe should they use INSTEX to support Iran financially. My bill enforces our sanctions on Iran and holds Europe accountable.

Europe claims INSTEX is necessary to provide medical assistance to the people of Iran amid the coronavirus pandemic. This explanation is false, since medical supplies are, rightly, not subject to U.S. sanctions.

So, why are Europe and Iran acting now? The health crisis has led to the culmination of two key events. First, Europe has been economically devastated by the virus and is looking for an economic lifeline, making them willing to create a deal with Iran. Second, as the U.S. battles the pandemic, Iran and Europe both hope that we have taken our eyes off the ball.

We cannot allow the coronavirus crisis to lead us to the crisis of tomorrow: Iran obtaining a nuclear weapon. If we turn a blind eye to Europe's actions today, the Iranian public, our national security, and the global community will suffer the devastating consequences of a nuclear Iran.

The U.S. must act and be proactive to hold Iran and those who financially support Iran to account. Proactive, targeted measures are needed now.

We will not allow Iran to use the coronavirus as cover.

*Rep. Bryan Steil, a Republican, represents Wisconsin's 1st Congressional District. He is a member of the House Financial Services Committee.*