

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 15, 2024

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232 Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Johnson;

We are extremely disappointed by your decision to not invite the Kenyan President to address a joint session of Congress during his state visit May 22-23, 2024. We urge you to reconsider this decision and grant President Ruto an invitation to address Congress. Given Kenya's important regional and global role, hearing from President Ruto during this visit would greatly benefit the United States Congress.

Kenya is an important partner of the United States, and a leader in Africa. The state visit this month will not only celebrate the six decades of U.S.-Kenyan partnership, but also set a course for cooperation on critical global issues including advancing global peace and security, expanding inclusive economic development, protecting universal human rights and dignity, and confronting the reality of the climate crisis.

Foreign adversaries like China, Russia, and Iran are working tirelessly to subvert America's alliances, particularly in Africa. You have spoken previously about the need to strengthen America's influence in the face of these threats. A recent Gallup poll showing erosion in American prestige among Africans¹ underscores the need for Congress to engage more respectfully and consistently with African leaders and people. Yet your choice not to provide the Kenyan President, a key African partner, the opportunity to address the Congress helps create an opening for autocratic adversaries to make inroads in African public opinion.

The people of Kenya deserve more respect. Congress has not hosted an African leader for a joint session in nearly two decades, but has already hosted Prime Minister Modi of India, President Herzog of Israel and Prime Minister Kishida of Japan during this Congress. Failing to offer the same invitation to President Ruto risks sending the message that African partnerships are less valued by Congress. We strongly urge you to reconsider and invite President Ruto to address Congress when he is here later this month.

Sincerely,



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

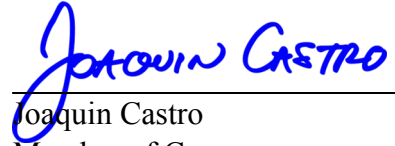


Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress

¹ <https://news.gallup.com/poll/644222/loses-soft-power-edge-africa.aspx>



Sara Jacobs
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Africa




Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress



Sydney Kamlager-Dove
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



Mark Takano
Member of Congress



Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress



Brad Sherman
Member of Congress



Gabe Amo
Member of Congress



Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick
Member of Congress



Grace Meng
Member of Congress