

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 8, 2022

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

As you prepare for the US-ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Special Summit now reportedly scheduled for March 28 and 29, we urge you to place democracy, good governance, and human rights as key items on the summit's agenda.

We strongly support your administration's hosting this gathering, and believe that strengthening and deepening US engagement with ASEAN and working with our ASEAN partners to build functional problem-solving regional architecture are essential for the success of the larger Indo-Pacific strategy.

We are likewise concerned, however, with what can only be characterized as a trend of "democratic backsliding" in Southeast Asia over the past several years, including last year's coup in Burma, and fear that if left unaddressed this dynamic will undermine US efforts to work with our partners to construct a free and open Indo-Pacific animated not just by shared interests but by shared values. Indeed, as your administration seeks to build a "Year of Action" to turn commitments from the Summit for Democracy into concrete results that shore up democracies around the world – notably pushing back against the illusory appeal of authoritarianism, defending and promoting respect for human rights, and combating corruption – the US-ASEAN Summit provides an important opportunity to demonstrate in tangible ways that our aspirations carry with them real and demonstrable policy action.

To that end, we request a consultation between our offices and appropriate administration officials at the earliest possible time to discuss your planning and proposed activities to address democracy, rule of law, human rights and good governance for the US-ASEAN Summit.

Sincerely,



Robert Menendez  
United States Senator



James E. Risch  
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



Marco Rubio  
United States Senator



Patrick Leahy  
United States Senator



Todd Young  
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senator