

**Hon. Tim Walz, Representative from Minnesota, Ranking Member,
Congressional-Executive Commission on China**

Statement for Hearing:

**"Examination into the Abuse and Extralegal Detention of Legal
Advocate Chen Guangcheng and His Family"**

November 1, 2011

I want to thank the Chairman, Congressman Chris Smith, and the Co-chairman, Senator Sherrod Brown, for convening this extremely important hearing. I want to thank each of our witnesses who are here today. We truly appreciate your attendance, and I very much look forward to hearing your remarks on this important issue.

Today, we hold this hearing to recognize and to honor one of China's most high-profile human rights activists, Chen Guangcheng. As a person and as an activist, Chen stands out as someone who exemplifies profound human courage and an unwavering commitment to justice. Chen not only overcame the hardships of being blinded at a young age, but also succeeded in becoming an inspiring legal advocate—one who touched the lives of people in and outside of China.

In his legal work, Chen exposed China's brutal application of its population policies. He upheld the rights of the disabled and fought on behalf of victims of discrimination. For his accomplishments, Chen was not rewarded. Rather, Chinese authorities sent him to prison for more than four years. Upon conclusion of his sentence, Chen was not set free. Rather, he was placed under an illegal form of house arrest that has precluded Chen and his family from their freedom and livelihood.

Chen and his family remain under illegal house arrest, and even today the conditions of their detention are shrouded in mystery. Police and violent thugs are stationed night and day around Chen's home in Linyi city, Shandong province, to prevent anyone from accessing them. We know that since Chen's release from prison in September of last year, Chen and his wife have reportedly suffered physical and mental abuse at the hands of officials. Chen suffers from a digestive disorder and reportedly has been denied medical treatment. His daughter, now six, has only recently been allowed to attend school under the watchful eye of law enforcement officers. Chen explained his circumstances in a videotape released in February of this year, saying "I've come out of a small jail and entered a bigger one."

I have followed China closely since I taught high school there more than two decades ago. I know China has announced notable reforms and advancements in recent years. I applaud the accomplishments of the Chinese people and recognize that some in the Chinese government advocate for greater rule of law. But, we cannot believe China is serious about the rule of law while Chen Guangcheng and his family are being forcefully held and abused. We cannot believe China is serious about human rights while it flagrantly violates its own laws and its international human rights commitments.

We urge China today to end this ongoing illegal detention and to free Chen and his family. We urge China to stand on the side of those brave activists that have traveled to Linyi in Shandong province to inquire about Chen in the face of violent reprisals and shameless threats. We urge China to embrace Chen

and other civil rights activists and to make room for these selfless heroes—the leaders that all countries need for a stable society that respects human rights and the rule of law. Finally, let us remind China that all great nations achieve more through open dialogue and the free flow of information than through forced silences.

I thank each of you for being here today to honor this man, his family, and the many other advocates facing uncertain punishments and unwarranted confinement. I thank those of you who are sitting in this room that know that we each share a responsibility to raise Chen's story and to voice our concerns on behalf of China's many advocates who remain detained and silenced.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman.