



ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
SENATOR JEFF MERKLEY, CHAIRMAN
REPRESENTATIVE JAMES P. MCGOVERN, COCHAIRMAN

**Statement of Rep. James P. McGovern
Co-chair, Congressional-Executive Commission on China**

**Hearing on
CECC at 20: Two Decades of Human Rights Abuse and
Defense in China**

December 13, 2022

As delivered

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for scheduling this hearing. I look forward to the testimony from our witnesses.

I want to thank you for your incredible leadership. It has been an honor to serve alongside you, as well as with my friend Congressman Suozzi from New York. I've really admired your style and your commitment to the human rights of the Chinese people.

Today we take stock of the changes in China and the evolution of international law in the two decades since the CECC was established.

Our intent is not to look back but to plan for the future by assessing our work amidst a changing landscape.

Xi Jinping will continue to lead a government that employs the newest tools to suppress dissenting viewpoints, impose social control, and repress critics domestically and across borders.

We want to make sure that the Commission is properly equipped and oriented to fulfill its mandate and to serve our constituents – the Congress, the Executive Branch, the China human rights community, and most important of all, the people of China.

Chinese, Tibetans, Uyghurs, Southern Mongolians, Hong Kongers and all others who live in the PRC deserve to have their rights and dignity respected.

Human rights are inherent to all human beings, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and protected by the covenants and agreements that have flowed from it.

The Chinese Communist Party would have us believe that some rights count more than others, citing “Chinese values” to discount certain civil and political rights.

Some in the United States also believe that some rights count more than others, citing “American values” to discount certain social and economic rights.

Under international law, both are wrong. Human rights are universal, interdependent and mutually reinforcing.

This Commission, by statute, is mandated to assess China’s compliance with *international* human rights standards. These standards are not determined by any party in China, and not by any party in the United States. These standards, codified at the United Nations and widely adjudicated, apply to every person in every country and territory on Earth.

We do a disservice to the people of China if the Commission’s work is shaped by personal or political preferences, rather than based on the universal human rights that the people of China are entitled to.

Over two decades the Commission has earned a reputation for objective and informative analysis. Let's keep it that way.

On a personal note, this is my last hearing as cochair of this Commission. With my cochairs, Senators Rubio and Merkley, along with Congressman Smith, we have sought to translate the Commission's expertise into advocacy and legislative impact. We helped get into law the Hong Kong Autonomy Act, the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act, the PROTECT Hong Kong Act, the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act, and the Tibetan Policy and Support Act.

I give special mention to the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, which was the product of Commission staff research, that led to a report, a hearing, legislation and then law. I propose it as a model both for how the Commission can be effective and how to craft robust human rights policy.

I hope to be able to continue to serve on this Commission, and to work on a bipartisan basis to promote human rights in China.

Lastly, none of this would be possible without the hard-working non-partisan staff of the Commission. They are experts in the field and committed to both the cause of human rights and to the accuracy in reporting which has made the Commission's work so respected. I cannot thank them enough.

One staffer I will mention by name is Judy Wright. She is retiring after 20 years at the Commission, and many before that in the House. As Director of Administration, she has made everything possible. We will miss her. I wish her a well-deserved and fulfilling retirement.

I also want to acknowledge our lead staffer in the House, Todd Stein. I have worked with nobody who knows more about China, who is more fluent on human rights law, who cares more deeply about this issue than him. It has really been a privilege and an honor to work alongside

him, and we're going to continue to work together on this issue for many years to come.

As we're waiting for Speaker Pelosi to arrive, let me say that I want to pay a special tribute to her. She reminds us all the time, even when it's inconvenient, about how important focusing on human rights is. With regard to human rights in China, she reminds us that if we don't have the courage and the guts to speak out against human rights abuses in China, then we don't have the moral authority to speak out against human rights abuses anywhere on this planet.

The legislation that both of us have pointed out, that has been a product of this Commission, would not have become law unless it was for the leadership of Speaker Pelosi in the House. I cannot thank her enough for her commitment.

Again, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses, and to their recommendations for how this Commission, the Congress and the United States government can best advocate for the universal rights of the people of China.