

Congressional-Executive Commission on China
Hearing
on
Corporate Sponsorship of the 2022 Beijing Olympics

Tuesday, July 27, 2021 – 10:00am
Virtual via Cisco Webex

Statement of Senator Jeff Merkley
Chair
Congressional-Executive Commission on China

- Good morning. Welcome to today’s hearing of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China on “Corporate Sponsorship of the 2022 Beijing Olympics.” The meeting has been brought to order.
- As the world watches the Olympics currently unfolding in Japan, this Commission remains deeply disturbed that in less than seven months another Olympic Games are scheduled to begin in the shadow of some of the world’s most egregious human rights abuses. The Olympic Games exist to uplift the human spirit. Yet, unless something dramatically changes, in a few months’ time the Games will be held in a country that continues to mercilessly crush the human spirit, in Xinjiang, in Hong Kong, and in Tibet; among human rights activists and civil society; and anywhere where defenders of freedom stand up to the Chinese government’s bullying.
- This hearing will explore how Olympic corporate sponsors can leverage their influence to insist on concrete human rights improvements in China and how they will manage the reputational and material cost of being associated with an Olympic Games held in the midst of a genocide. It follows up on recommendations made at a May 18 hearing we held jointly with the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission on “China, Genocide and the Olympics.” That hearing demonstrated just how deep the bicameral and bipartisan congressional concern is on this issue. I am especially grateful to Representatives McGovern and Smith for their partnership and leadership.
- For this hearing, we have invited the U.S.-based companies who sponsor the Olympics through The Olympic Partner Programme of the International Olympic Committee. We are pleased that all five companies whose TOP sponsorships run through the 2022 Beijing Olympics have agreed to testify. These companies are some of the most well-known and respected brands in the world. This hearing is not meant to attack or embarrass individual

U.S. companies but rather to explore how key Olympic movement stakeholders, corporate stakeholders, can use their influence to ensure the Olympics live up to its values.

- Holding the 2022 Winter Olympics in China and allowing its authoritarian government to reap the rewards in its prestige and propaganda of hosting this globally-beloved event does not uphold the Olympic spirit. There is a parallel. That parallel is Berlin in 1936, when Hitler used the Olympics to put a real shine on his country at the same time he was already engaged in horrific acts against his own citizens, and worse was to come. But in this situation it's worse than Berlin in 1936 because the genocide is already underway.
- As my cochairman said in our last hearing, this is not the time for business as usual. We want to hear how TOP sponsors can help us deny the Chinese government its propaganda coup; support inspirational athletes without channeling the money through an IOC that has demonstrated little regard for internationally recognized human rights; influence the IOC to improve its policies so that the Olympics are never again awarded to a country engaged in genocide and gross violations of human rights; and embrace Olympic ideals of diversity and inclusion without supporting Olympic organizing committees that plan opening and closing ceremonies that will cynically display religious and ethnic minorities that in reality are being subjected to the cruelest forms of mass internment, slavery, forced sterilization, religious repression, and destruction of cultural and practices.
- I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.