



**Statement of Rep. Christopher Smith,  
Congressional-Executive Commission on China  
(CECC)**

**“Hong Kong’s Summer of Discontent  
and U.S. Policy”**

**Tuesday, September 17, 2019, 10 a.m.  
419 Dirksen Senate Office Building**

*As prepared for delivery*

The people of Hong Kong have shown us this summer—in often creative and inspiring ways—that a free people will not easily accept the boot of repression without protest.

The protests roiling the streets of Hong Kong for the past three months are a daily reminder of the stark differences between free and authoritarian societies.

I believe that the Hong Kong people have done the world a great service. Before a global television audience, they have exposed Beijing’s plans to erode the freedoms guaranteed to Hong Kong by international treaty—in the process laying bear the perniciously repressive tactics used to keep the Chinese Communist Party in power.

And make no doubt about it, the Chinese Communist government is both uniquely repressive and incredibly paranoid about maintaining its grip on power.

There are now over a million Uyghurs interned in Orwellian political education camps. Human rights lawyers have disappeared and been horribly tortured in detention. Christians, Tibetans, labor activists, and journalists face unacceptable abuses and the most intrusive system of surveillance operating the world today.

Why would anyone want their political fate determined by Beijing? ***If given a choice, no one would.***

As inspiring as the protests have been, they have also raised serious concerns about the actions of the Hong Kong and Chinese Communist government.

The violence and use of force perpetrated against the protestors by thugs and police is extremely alarming.

Representative McGovern and I were the first members of Congress to call on the Trump Administration to suspend the sale of tear gas, rubber bullets, pepper spray and other crowd control equipment to the Hong Kong Police. I join now in Rep. McGovern's call to quickly pass the PROTECT Hong Kong Act, which would end sales of such equipment to the Hong Kong Police.

Also alarming are the repeated and irresponsible threats of intervention made by Chinese officials, particularly so given that this year marks the 30th Anniversary of the Tiananmen massacre.

The Hong Kong and Chinese Communist governments are alone responsible for the grievances expressed by the protestors and they alone can peacefully address their demands for universal suffrage and investigation of police tactics.

Blaming the U.S. government—and this Congress—for the protests is cowardly propaganda and not befitting a nation with aspirations of global leadership.

Beijing's long-term plan to undermine Hong Kong's autonomy and U.S. interest there. It is time that U.S. policy actively counters this plan. The first step is to pass the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act.

Five years ago, in the midst of the Umbrella Movement, I introduced the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act with my the CECC Cochair Senator Sherrod Brown. The bill allows for more flexible and robust U.S. responses to the steady erosion of Hong Kong's autonomy and human rights.

Over the years, Senator Rubio and I upgraded the bill to reflect the kidnapping of booksellers, the disqualification of elected lawmakers, and the political prosecutions of Joshua Wong, Nathan Law, Benny Tai and others.

However, every time we pushed for passage there was opposition from diplomats, experts, committee Chairs, and the American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong.

We were told not to upset the status quo. We were told our bill would cost U.S. businesses. We were told that upgrading US policy would undermine diplomatic efforts to work with Beijing and its hand-selected political leaders in Hong Kong.

It is the same bad advice that we have been hearing on China since the 1990s. It is clear by now that China experts have failed the American people and their advice

helped gut parts of our economy. Listening to their advice this time will fail the people of Hong Kong as well.

It is time to pass this legislation in Congress. We have wide agreement for passage of this bipartisan and bicameral legislation.

Specifically, the *Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act* would

- Direct the Secretary of State to certify to Congress annually whether Hong Kong continues to deserve special treatment under U.S. law different from mainland China in such matters as trade, customs, sanctions enforcement, law enforcement cooperation, and protection of human rights and the rule of law.
- Direct the State Department not to deny entry visas based on the applicants' arrest or detention for participating in nonviolent protest activities in Hong Kong.
- Require an annual report from the Commerce Department on whether the Hong Kong government adequately enforces U.S. export controls and sanctions laws
- Require the Secretary of State to submit a strategy to Congress to protect U.S. citizens and businesses in Hong Kong from the erosion of autonomy and the rule of law because of actions taken by the Chinese Communist governments
- Require the President to identify and sanction persons in Hong Kong or in mainland China responsible for the erosion of Hong Kong's autonomy and serious abuses of human rights.

I've heard it said that the business of Hong Kong is business, but it clear to me now that the business of Hong Kong is freedom. It is freedom that undergirds the city's prosperity and its unique vitality. The U.S. and the international community have clear interest in protecting the rights and rule of law promised to the Hong Kong people.

I stand united with the people of Hong Kong and will not be silent in the face of threats to their guaranteed liberties and way of life.

The U.S. and the international community also cannot be silent. The whole world has a stake in a peaceful and just resolution in Hong Kong and the survival of the "One Country, Two Systems" model.