

**Statement of
Rep. Frank R. Wolf
February 7, 2002**

I want to thank Chairman Baucus and Chairman Bereuter for holding this hearing today.

I have strong concerns at the direction that this commission appears to be heading.

The legislation that created this commission is very clear about its functions. By law, this commission is to:

- a. "monitor the acts of the People's Republic of China which reflect compliance with or violation of human rights..."
- b. "compile and maintain lists of persons believed to be imprisoned, detained, or placed under house arrest, tortured, or otherwise persecuted by the Government of the People's Republic of China..."
- c. "monitor the development of the rule of law."

It was said by some Members who helped form this commission that they wanted it to be modeled on the highly effective Helsinki Commission. The Helsinki Commission played an important role in confronting, monitoring, and promoting human rights in the former Soviet Union. I believe the Helsinki Commission had a significant role in helping tear down the Iron Curtain. The Helsinki Commission was and is a strong advocate for human rights and religious freedom. Helsinki Commission Members traveled to the former Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc countries and confronted the political leadership about human rights and religious freedom issues. The Helsinki Commission sent letters to the former Soviet Union and spoke out publicly, advocating for specific individuals, for religious freedom, for the development of democracy and for the rule of law.

If the Congressional-Executive Commission on China wants to be successful; if the Congressional-Executive Commission on China wants to emulate the Helsinki Commission; if the Congressional-Executive Commission on China truly wants to promote human rights and the rule of law in China, it has to be a strong and outspoken advocate for human rights and religious freedom in China. I am concerned that this commission may not be willing to be such an advocate. I believe that the future of this commission depends on whether or not it will step up to the plate and confront the Chinese leadership on behalf of human rights, religious freedom and the rule of law.

I also am very concerned with the selection of commission staff members. Staff members appear to lack the experience in promoting human rights and religious freedom in China. With the commission's function to monitor human rights, religious freedom and the rule of law, the commission staff should be comprised of people who have a proven track record of promoting human rights, religious freedom and the rule of law in China.

Lastly, I am concerned with a statement made by James Feinerman who is testifying today. While I am sure Mr. Feinerman is a fine scholar and I respect his work, Mr. Feinerman stated in a 1997 Washington Post article that people in the United States who criticize China for its practice of forced prison labor are hypocrites. I enclose this article for the record. Mr. Feinerman is quoted as saying,

Harry Wu and others have tried to stir up a great controversy about how goods made by forced labor are flooding into our market...But in fact, it's only a tiny fraction of all Chinese goods. And it seems to me the height of hypocrisy for us to get on our high horse about China making its prisoners work, given the fact that

we do the same thing with our prisoners...[the Chinese prison system is designed] to make offenders pay a harsh penalty, on the theory that it scares people so they won't come back into the prison system. You can argue that it works. They have very low rates of recidivism. Who are we to argue with their choices?

Given that the Chinese government has imprisoned thousands of people--Roman Catholics, Protestants, Buddhists and Muslims--simply because of their faith; given that the Chinese government has imprisoned thousands of people for promoting democracy, if accurate, Mr. Feinerman's statement is very troubling.

I question the wisdom of selecting a person to testify about the rule of law in China who says of the Chinese system and its critics: "You can argue that it works....Who are we to argue with their choices?"

This commission is full of promise and faces great opportunity to make a difference. Like the Helsinki Committee, the Congressional-Executive Commission on China will only be effective if it speaks out and becomes an advocate for human rights and the rule of law in China.