

Congressman Joseph R. Pitts
Statement for CECC Hearing: *What Will Drive China's*
Future Legal Development? Reports From the Field
June 18, 2008

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this important hearing on *What Will Drive China's Future Legal Development? Reports From the Field*. I remain disturbed about the negative trends on human rights issues in China prior to the Olympic Games in August. Many thought the Chinese government would understand that with a brighter spotlight on its treatment of its citizens, the officials would take this opportunity to allow for more freedom for journalists, lawyers and human rights advocates. There were positive steps in relation to allowing reporting on the tragic earthquake in China, and this led to much international sympathy and humanitarian and disaster assistance. However, the general trends are disturbing as there is increased harassment of religious leaders and practitioners and others. Case in point is the May 21, 2008 recording of Chinese consulate official Mr. Peng Keyu describing his and other officials' role in organizing, in the United States, protests against and harassment of Falun Gong members. While this particular instance focused on Falun Gong, I have received reports of other Chinese religious believers or political activists inside the U.S. being harassed and threatened by Chinese government officials. It is indeed a problem when Chinese officials harass their own citizens at home and in a nation like ours where rule of law is established — it's even more disturbing when the Chinese government hacks the computers of Members of Congress who focus on raising awareness of human rights violations within China. That does not bode well for the positive treatment of the average Chinese citizen who wishes to peacefully express his or her social, political or religious views.

In our previous hearing, I mentioned being encouraged and discouraged during countless cycles of two steps forward and then three steps backwards in terms of the Chinese government's respect for the Chinese people. Sadly, since our February hearing, nothing has really changed. I continue to receive numerous reports about Chinese officials' actions against North Korean refugees, Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang Province, child laborers, Tibetans, Catholics loyal to the Vatican, and Protestant house church leaders and congregants. In fact, on June 1, 2008, government officials detained nine house church congregants in Henan for providing funds to help victims of the earthquake, and in late May, security officials confiscated a bank card, a mini-van, Bibles and Christian literature from a house church seminary. It does not appear the Chinese security officials are interested in maintaining any facade of treating religious believers with respect. There are additional reports, including from China Aid Association, that the "Ministry of Public Security has received funding from the Chinese Central Government to increase its campaign of eradicating house churches throughout China." Even further, this

morning I received a report that a senior house church leader, Mr. Zhang Mingxuan, and his interpreter were detained today as they traveled to meet with an official from the European Union; Pastor Zhang has been beaten, arrested, and imprisoned twelve times by Chinese security officials.

It takes great courage and leadership to challenge the Chinese government's actions and attitudes, even more so when the officials break their own laws. Yesterday, the National Endowment for Democracy held an event to honor "Chinese workers, lawyers, and writers working to advance democratic values and fundamental rights within China." Recipients of the NED award included Chen Guangcheng, Teng Biao, Li Heping, Li Baiguang, Zhang Jianhong, Yao Fuxing, and Hu Shigen. These individuals, our witnesses today, and others who cannot be named, are true heroes as they seek to make a better today and tomorrow for the people of China.

I look forward to hearing from our very distinguished witnesses and receiving their insights and recommendations on steps the U.S. Government should take to further support the fundamental rights of the Chinese people.