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CONGRATULATING LIU XIAOBO ON THE 2010 NOBEL PEACE PRIZE AND DEBATE OF H.RES. 1717

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(Excerpts)

Madam Speaker, for far too long the Chinese government has evaded virtually all scrutiny of its horrific human rights record – usually by employing bullying tactics, including threats to nations, multilateral organizations like the UN, and individuals.

Today the Chinese government brutalizes women and children through forced abortion and coercive sterilization as part of its barbaric one-child per couple policy, which makes brothers and sisters illegal; tortures and incarcerates Falun Gong practitioners, Uyghurs, Tibetan Buddhists and Christians; violently crushes independent labor unions; and has transformed the Internet into a tool for surveillance and censorship.

The naming of Liu Xiaobo as the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize laureate, and the

Chinese government's outrageous response invites – obliges – us to sustained scrutiny and meaningful action. News reports suggest over one and one-half dozen countries have been so intimidated by Beijing that they won't send a delegation to Oslo

Today I urge my colleagues to adopt H. Res. 1717, expressing Congress's profound respect for and solidarity with Liu Xiaobo and all those who peacefully advocate for human rights and democracy in the PRC.

Madam Speaker, my resolution honors Liu Xiaobo, who in the 1980s had a brilliant academic career in front of him in China. When the Tiananmen Square demonstrations began in 1989, he was a visiting professor in New York. He effectively gave all that up when he flew back to China to join the students demonstrating for democracy on the square

– where he insisted that the students themselves adhere to democratic process. Liu has been working and sacrificing for democratic reform ever since – through the hundreds of remarkable essays he has written, and the courage with which he has borne imprisonment – four times.

My resolution highlights Charter 08, the democracy proclamation that Liu played a lead role in organizing, drafting, and of which he was one of the first signers. It is an astonishing document, a worthy heir of its great models, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Charter 77, the Czech human rights declaration that in the late 1970s contributed so much to the rebirth of conscience in the eastern European captive nations – and ultimately to their peaceful democratization.

But the Chinese government saw in this magnificent document only a crime – “inciting subversion of state power.” It arrested Liu in December 2008, and in December 2009 sentenced him to 11 years in prison.

Madam Speaker, in February of this year I led a group of six other Members in nominating Liu for the Nobel Peace Prize: my very good friends Reps. David Wu, Bob Inglis, Thaddeus McCotter, Gus Bilirakis, Lincoln Diaz-Balart, and Joe Pitts. Our nomination proposed Liu as “a visionary leader,” remarkable for “his patriotism, his civic courage, and the generous tone of his work, which has never sought to divide his country or cause civil conflict, but always to raise the Chinese people’s awareness of its dignity and rights, and to call on his government to govern within... the international human rights agreements it has signed.”

Though we didn’t know it at the time, many other people had the same idea. Liu was also nominated by two Nobel Peace laureates, the 14th Dalai Lama and Bishop Desmond Tutu, as well as by former Czech president Vaclav Havel and many members of the Czech and Slovak parliaments, Norwegian MP Jan Tore Sanner, and a group of highly respected human rights defenders and leaders in the fields of philosophy, literature, philanthropy, and finance.

Madam Speaker, H. Res. 1717 points up the words of the Norwegian Nobel Committee that: “the campaign to establish universal human rights in China is being waged by many Chinese... through the severe punishment meted out to him, Liu has become the foremost symbol of this wide-ranging struggle for human rights in China.”

The resolution explicitly states that in honoring Liu Xiaobo it honors all those who have promoted democratic reform in China, including all those who participated in the 1989 Tiananmen Square demonstration. After Liu’s wife told him of the award, he wept and dedicated the prize to “the Tiananmen martyrs.”

Madam Speaker, the resolution speaks frankly on some crucial points. It not only calls on the Chinese government to release Liu Xiaobo, it asserts that Liu is a political prisoner. It emphasizes that “violations of human rights,” including the persecution of Liu Xiaobo, “are matters of legitimate concern to other governments” – making explicit that Congress cannot accept the Chinese or any government’s claim that its human rights abuses are a purely internal matter.

Similarly, the resolution calls on the Chinese government to cease censoring

media and Internet reporting of the award and to cease defaming Liu as a “a political tool of the West,” and a “traitorous operative.” These are ridiculous charges, but they go to the heart of the issue that Liu analyzed in his 2005 essay, “The CPC’s Dictatorial Patriotism”: the dictatorial government’s fallacious equation of itself with the Chinese nation, so that whoever opposes the dictatorship is treated as the enemy of the whole people.

Madam Speaker, I’d like to conclude with several paragraphs from Liu Xiaobo’s closing statement at his 2009 trial. They beautifully convey his love of his country, his transparent integrity, and the greatness of his soul.

But I still want to say to this regime, which is depriving me of my freedom, that I stand by the convictions I expressed in my “June Second Hunger Strike Declaration” twenty years ago—I have no enemies and no hatred. None of the police who monitored, arrested, and interrogated me, none of the prosecutors who indicted me, and none of the judges who judged me are my enemies. Although there is no way I can accept your monitoring, arrests, indictments, and verdicts, I respect your professions and your integrity, including those of the two prosecutors... who are now bringing charges against me... During interrogation... I could sense your respect and your good faith. Hatred can rot away at a person’s intelligence and conscience. Enemy mentality will poison the spirit of a nation, incite cruel mortal struggles, destroy a society’s tolerance and humanity, and hinder a nation’s progress toward freedom and

democracy. That is why I hope to be able to transcend my personal experiences as I look upon our nation’s development and social change, to counter the regime’s hostility with utmost goodwill, and to dispel hatred with love.

At the conclusion of his statement, Liu addressed his wife, Liu Xia:

“My dear, with your love I can calmly face my impending trial, having no regrets about the choices I’ve made and am optimistically awaiting tomorrow. I look forward to [the day] when my country is a land with freedom of expression, where the speech of every citizen will be treated equally well... where every citizen can state political views without fear, and where no one can under any circumstances suffer political persecution for voicing divergent political views. I hope that I will be the last victim of China’s endless literary inquisitions and that from now on no one will be incriminated because of speech.

Freedom of expression is the foundation of human rights, the source of humanity, and the mother of truth. To strangle freedom of speech is to trample on human rights, stifle humanity, and suppress truth.

In order to exercise the right to freedom of speech conferred by the Constitution, one should fulfill the social responsibility of a Chinese citizen. There is nothing criminal in anything I have done. [But] if charges are brought against me because of this, I have no complaints.”