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The Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act

Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ)
Speaker's Press Conference
Excerpts of Remarks
Sept. 18, 2019

Since the 1989 Tiananmen massacre thirty years ago, I've had the privilege of working in a bipartisan way with Speaker Pelosi on human rights, the rule of law and democracy for the people of China.

We have always believed that every person in China deserves better.

And have always understood that solemn promises made by Beijing—were seldom kept—and that far too many leaders of the free world were far too eager to blindly accept fiction over fact.

Under President Xi Jinping, human rights abuse throughout China including the pervasive use of torture, [religious persecution](#) and [human trafficking](#) have significantly worsened.

During the [2014 Umbrella Movement](#) the world saw the courageous people of Hong Kong demanding that Beijing not renege on promises made to ensure universal suffrage and authentic elections in 2017.

Despite Mr. Xi's brutal crackdown on peaceful protestors then—and especially now—the resolve, courage, tenacity and clarity of purpose of the people of Hong Kong shines through the darkness like the sun.

The great young leader Joshua Wong reminded us at yesterday's hearing that a fourth of the population of Hong Kong—[about 2 million people](#)—turned out for one of the peaceful protests. Where has that ever happened?

Five years ago—in 2014—joined by Mrs. Pelosi, I introduced the bipartisan [Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act](#). We did it again in [2015](#), in [2017](#) and again this year.

[My new bill, the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act of 2019—cosponsored by Mr. McGovern—is a blueprint for meaningful action.](#)

Specifically, the Act:

- Directs 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.

- Directs the State Department not to deny entry visas based on the applicants' arrest or detention for participating in nonviolent protest activities in Hong Kong.
- Requires an annual report from the Commerce Department on whether the Hong Kong government adequately enforces U.S. export controls and sanctions laws.
- Requires 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.
- Requires 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 is clear to me now that the business of Hong Kong is freedom.

The people of Hong Kong are working to protect the rights and rule of law that are the foundation of the city's prosperity and unique vitality.

We must stand united with the people of Hong Kong.