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DEMOCRATIC POLICY COMMITTEE

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4904

April 14, 2006

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Bush:

We write regarding your upcoming meeting with Chinese President Hu Jintao. We recognize that the U.S.-China relationship is multifaceted and dynamic, and there are a number of issues to be discussed with President Hu, including addressing our growing trade deficit, accomplishing our common goal of a denuclearized Korean peninsula, cooperating on security initiatives, and working together to ensure stable energy supplies. Clearly, these are important concerns. However, in addition to these issues, we urge you to press President Hu on another crucial aspect of our relationship -- China's respect for basic human rights.

There has been an unfortunate backsliding in China's human rights record in recent years. As the State Department's most recent Human Rights Report on China noted, in 2005 there was "a trend towards increased harassment, detention, and imprisonment by government and security authorities of those perceived as threatening to government authority." The hope that President Hu's government would lead China down a path of reform and greater freedom for the Chinese people has not been realized. Instead, Chinese authorities have grown increasingly adept at using the tools of technology to repress free expression and dissent, and to harass, intimidate, and imprison those who would stand up for the rights of their fellow citizens.

It is imperative that the United States speak out in defense of the ideals that we cherish, and encourage other nations to respect the rights of their citizens. We recently introduced a resolution in the Congress calling on China to respect the rule of law and the basic human rights of its citizens, and urging Chinese authorities to stop their harassment of Gao Zhisheng and other "rights defender" (or "wei quan") lawyers. We ask that you raise this issue with President Hu and press for the release of those who have been wrongly imprisoned in China, such as U.S. citizen and entrepreneur Jude Shao.

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Mr. President, you have spoken repeatedly about advancing freedom and democracy around the world. We urge you to convey the same message to President Hu when he visits Washington, DC.

Sincerely,



Russell D. Feingold
United States Senator



Sam Brownback
United States Senator