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ADERHOLT PRESSURES CHINA TO RELEASE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE WINNER AND CHANGE HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICES

Members of Congress Speak Out Against China During Press Conference

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congressman Robert Aderholt (R-Haleyville) today joined several Members of Congress and human rights activists in honoring Chinese dissident and Nobel Peace Prize winner Liu Xiaobo and calling on the Chinese government to release him from jail before the December 10th Nobel Ceremony.

The Congressional Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, whom Congressman Aderholt is a member, hosted a press conference today to highlight a resolution (H.Res. 1717) to be voted on today in Congress that congratulates Xiabo on his Nobel prize and "honors Liu Xiaobo's promotion of democratic reform in China."

Aderholt was joined by the likely incoming Foreign Affairs Committee Chairwoman, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), Reps. James McGovern (D-MA), Rep. Frank Wolfe (R-VA), Rep. David Wu (D-OR), Rep. Joseph Pitts (R-PA) and Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ).

"I commend the courage of the Nobel Peace Prize selection committee for awarding the prize to Liu Xiaobo," said Congressman Aderholt. "But most of all, we honor Liu Xiaobo and the many other courageous individuals in China who have spoken out and continue to speak up for peaceful, positive changes in China."

In October, Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo was awarded the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize for his work in promoting peace in China and around the World. Liu was a leader in the 1989 Tiananmen Square demonstrations for democratic reform in China. Dr. Liu was also one of the authors of Charter 08, a historic manifesto that calls on the Chinese Communist Party to abandon authoritarian rule in favor of democracy, the guarantee of human rights, and the rule of law. Liu was taken into custody shortly before the manifesto was released, and in December 2009, following what was widely regarded as an unfair trial, he was sentenced to 11 years in prison for inciting subversion of state power.

Chinese authorities have dismissed calls for Liu's release and have obstructed efforts by Liu's family members to travel to Oslo, Norway to represent Liu in receiving the Nobel Peace Prize on December 10th. Dr. Liu's wife is currently under house arrest. In addition, Chinese authorities have launched a global campaign to pressure other countries not to send diplomatic representation to the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony. Some countries have already bowed to Chinese pressure to boycott the Nobel Ceremony, including Russia, Kazakhstan, Colombia, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Serbia, Iraq, Iran, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Venezuela, the Philippines, Egypt, Sudan, Ukraine, Cuba and Morocco.

Aderholt continued, “Liu is representative of the thousands of Chinese dissidents that remain languishing in prison due to their political or religious beliefs. Chinese authorities continue to crackdown on Protestant Christians, Catholics, Tibetan Buddhists, Muslim Uyghurs and members of the Falun Gong for exercising their religious beliefs. If China wants to be seen as a responsible stakeholder in the international community, it must take measurable steps to improve its abysmal human rights record.”

International human rights is an issue that Congressman Robert Aderholt (R-AL) has worked on for over a decade with the Helsinki Commission and the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission.

The mission of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission is to promote, defend and advocate internationally recognized human rights norms in a nonpartisan manner, both within and outside of Congress. The Commission is named after former Congressman Tom Lantos (D-CA), who served in Congress from 1981 until he died in 2008 from cancer. Lantos, who was the only Holocaust survivor to have served in the U.S. Congress, remained very involved in human rights issues and co-founded the Congressional Human Rights Caucus in 1983.

The Helsinki Commission is an independent agency of the U.S. Government charged with monitoring compliance with the Helsinki Accords and advancing comprehensive security through promotion of human rights, democracy, and economic, environmental and military cooperation in 56 countries. Rep. Aderholt has been a member of the Commission since 2001 and is currently the vice-chairman of the Human Rights Committee of the Helsinki Commission’s Parliamentary Assembly.

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Congressman Aderholt speaks at a press conference honoring Chinese Nobel Peace Prize winner Liu Xiaobo and calling on the Chinese government to release him from jail.