

Throughout this ordeal, I have stood with Fred and Cindy and their entire family. I will continue to, but I also want to say today, as we discuss these broader issues with North Korea, let's keep Otto Warmbier at the front of our minds. Let's be sure he is high on our agenda and in our consciousness as we deal with North Korea and, again, understanding, because of our experience with Otto, the brutal nature of this regime.

#### CHINA INVESTIGATION

Mr. President, I will now talk about the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations' hearing we had today.

I am here to talk about China and the impact it is having on the U.S. education system. I chair the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, which is a subcommittee of the Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee. My colleague TOM CARPER, on the other side of the aisle, is the ranking member. We worked together on bipartisan—I believe you would say nonpartisan investigations.

We had success working on the opioid crisis in coming up with legislation to stop fentanyl from coming through the mail, the deadliest of all the drugs. We also had success in pushing back against human trafficking, leading to actually shutting down the website that trafficked more women and children than any other one, [backpage.com](http://backpage.com).

Today we looked at something that is also very important for our country; that is, understanding better how these Confucius Institutes work. We issued a bipartisan report today talking about how there is a lack of transparency in how American colleges and universities manage their Confucius Institutes. These are located at more than 100 colleges and universities around the country. These institutions in America have received more than \$150 million in support from the Government of China for these Confucius Institutes since 2006.

Confucius Institutes are enterprises that engage in the teaching of Chinese culture and language, and they are at universities and colleges around the world. These Confucius Institutes are designed, funded, and primarily staffed by the Chinese Government. The Chinese Government bills them as an opportunity for cultural exchange, and the funding comes from them. It is an appealing prospect for many U.S. schools trying to meet their demand for language instruction, but we need to be careful.

There needs to be more transparency in how these institutes operate in the United States, and there needs to be more reciprocity so the United States can also provide its cultural institutions in China. That is not happening now because China has systematically shut down comparable U.S. State Department public diplomacy efforts on college campuses in China.

Let me be clear. I do support cultural exchange—we all should; it is a good

thing—with China and with the international community more broadly, but there needs to be reciprocity, and there needs to be appropriate engagement without, in this case, the Chinese Government determining what is said and what is done on U.S. campuses.

The law must be followed. That is why transparency is so important.

This morning we held a hearing following an 8-month investigation into this issue. Based on our findings, let me focus on these two issues of transparency and reciprocity—transparency in how colleges and universities manage the institutes which are controlled, funded, and mostly staffed by the Chinese Government and the lack of reciprocity in how China does not permit U.S. State Department programming in China.

Our report details how China, known for its one-sided dealings in trade—not having a level playing field in trade—also does not have a level playing field with regard to these cultural changes.

Our report documents how U.S. officials had expressed concerns about China's influence through its Confucius Institutes. Recently, the FBI's Assistant Director for Counterintelligence testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee that the Confucius Institutes are "not strictly a cultural institute" and that "they are ultimately beholden to the Chinese government." The State Department has labeled Confucius Institutes "China's most prominent soft power platform."

Higher education groups have also expressed concern. The American Council of Education, the National Association of Scholars, and the American Association of University Professors have all recommended that U.S. schools fundamentally change how they manage Confucius Institutes or consider shutting them down.

Other foreign governments have already acted. For example, the UK Conservative Party Commission on Human Rights called for the suspension of further agreements until it can complete a more comprehensive review of potential threats to academic freedom at the Confucius Institutes in the United Kingdom.

The Canadian Province of New Brunswick recently announced that it would cease its Confucius Institute operations, citing academic freedom concerns and that the program provides a "one-dimensional" view of China. Finally, an Australian State, New South Wales, is currently reviewing the Confucius Institute program, citing that it exposes children to propaganda.

These concerns are well-founded. Past statements by Chinese officials make clear the purpose of Confucius Institutes. For example, in 2011, a former member of the Chinese Government explained:

The Confucius Institute is an appealing brand for expanding our culture abroad. It has made an important contribution toward improving our soft power. The "Confucius" brand has a natural attractiveness. Using

the excuse of teaching Chinese language, everything looks reasonable and logical.

The Director General of Confucius Institute Headquarters has also commented on how the program controls messaging about controversial topics. She said in 2014:

Every mainland China teacher we send . . . will say Taiwan belongs to China. We should have one China. No hesitation.

So with regard to issues like Taiwan, Tibet, and Tiananmen Square, the Confucius Institutes stay away from those issues that are considered controversial.

We know that Confucius Institutes exist as one part of China's broader, long-term strategy, but China has invested heavily in them, giving about \$150 million to U.S. schools just in the last decade. China's other long-term initiatives include its Made in China 2025 plan, which is a push to lead the world in certain advanced technology manufacturing. The Thousand Talents Program is another state-run initiative designed to recruit Chinese researchers in the United States to return to China for significant financial gain, bringing with them the research knowledge gained at U.S. universities and companies. We plan on continuing to examine the U.S. Government's responses to these issues as well.

Confucius Institutes, by the way, do not stop at colleges and universities alone. China has also opened more than 500 Confucius Classrooms programs at U.S. K-12 schools. In fact, the Confucius Classroom program is a priority for the Chinese Government. A document obtained by the subcommittee during our investigation details a plan to expand Confucius Classrooms by seeking "top-down policy support from the state government, legislative and educational institutions, with particular emphasis on access to the support from school district superintendents and principals."

Over the last 8 months, we interviewed U.S. school officials, teachers, and Confucius Institute instructors. We also reviewed tens of thousands of pages of contracts, emails, financial records, and other internal documents obtained from more than 100 U.S. schools that were either active or recently closed Confucius Institutes.

Since our investigation started, more than 10 U.S. schools announced they would be closing their Confucius Institutes. We found that Chinese funding for Confucius Institutes comes with strings attached—strings that can compromise academic freedom. The Chinese Government vets and approves all Chinese directors and teachers, events, research proposals, and speakers at U.S. Confucius Institutes. Chinese teachers sign contracts pledging with the Chinese Government that they will follow Chinese law and "conscientiously safeguard China's national interests."

Some schools actually contractually agreed that both Chinese and U.S. law will apply at Confucius Institutes in

the United States on their school campuses. Think about that. American universities are agreeing to comply with Chinese law on their campuses. This application of Chinese law at these schools can result, of course, in exporting China's censorship of political debate and prevent discussion of politically sensitive topics.

As such, numerous U.S. school officials told the subcommittee that Confucius Institutes were not the place to discuss topics like the independence of Taiwan, Tibet, or the Tiananmen Square massacre. Put simply, as one U.S. school administrator told us: "You know what you're getting when something is funded by the Chinese government."

Investigators from the Government Accountability Office also spoke with U.S. officials, who acknowledge that hosting the Confucius Institute could limit events or activities critical of China, not just at the Confucius Institute but also elsewhere on campus.

In response to the growing popularity of Confucius Institutes, the United States initiated its own public diplomacy program in China through the State Department. The Chinese Government effectively shut it down. Since 2010, the State Department has provided \$5.1 million in grant funding for 29 American Cultural Centers in China. Through this program, a U.S. school would partner with a Chinese school to set up a cultural center, which would enable Chinese students to better understand our country, our culture.

The Chinese Government stifled the program from the start. Seven of the 29 American Cultural Centers never even opened. Of those that did open, they needed permission from the Chinese partner schools, sometimes including local Chinese Communist Party officials, just to hold events. Eventually, because of the obstacles, the State Department stopped funding the program altogether. There are four programs remaining. They are all going to be phased out entirely by this summer.

We heard some very interesting testimony today from the State Department—testimony that details the academic environment in China that has made it impossible for us to have the kind of freedom they enjoy over here. The State Department testimony aligns with the findings of our investigation.

For example, while the State Department conducts various public diplomacy programs in China, the Chinese Government has increasingly impeded access to some segments of Chinese society, including Chinese schools and universities. All Chinese institutions, including universities, have a foreign affairs officer or a "gatekeeper" that is an internal governmental office that manages contact between the non-Chinese entities and the institution. Any Chinese institutions that wish to interact with foreign government officials must obtain approval first from this gatekeeper.

The State Department even told us that the Fulbright Program, a prestigious and longstanding student exchange program, is impeded as Chinese authorities have prevented Chinese alumni of the Fulbright Program from forming a Fulbright Association, a standard practice in other countries. We even heard directly from an American educator who was detained by the Chinese police and questioned extensively about her involvement with a State Department grant. While the Department of State said they conveyed to the Chinese Government that it expects reciprocal access for U.S. diplomats in our programs, it is not happening. Obviously, more needs to be done.

While the State Department is mostly known for its overseas diplomatic efforts, it also has oversight responsibilities right here in the United States with regard to these Confucius Institutes. The State Department conducts field site reviews to ensure that foreign nationals who come to the United States on these Exchange Visitor Programs have visas that are appropriate and that they are here for the stated reason.

There are roughly 100 Confucius Institutes at colleges and universities in America, yet the State Department has conducted field visits only to two of them. At those two, they found serious problems. At the Confucius Institute, the State Department revoked more than 30 visas for Chinese visitors who were supposed to be working at the university that sponsored their visa but were actually teaching in the K-12 environment. They also discovered evidence of "fraudulent paperwork and coaching" that was a "deliberate attempt to deceive" investigators, according to the State Department.

The Chinese director coached the Chinese teachers to tell the State Department they were working on research programs that they really weren't working on at the university's campus.

State also told us it does not collect the visa information specifically related to the Confucius Institute, so we don't know how many Confucius Institute teachers there are or where they are. Again, they visited only 2 schools out of 100, and in those they found serious problems with regard to the State Department's responsibilities on visas.

Our investigation also identified failures at the Department of Education that have contributed to a lack of transparency and oversight at schools that take money from foreign governments. If a U.S. school receives more than \$250,000 from a single foreign source in 1 year, it is required by law to report that data to the Department of Education, which, in turn, publishes it on its website. The Department of Education, however, has not issued any guidance on foreign gift reporting for 14 years, the same year that China opened its first Confucius Institute, and our investigation was able to find

that 70 percent of the colleges and universities that should have reported receiving funds for Confucius Institutes from China did not; 70 percent are out of compliance. When a school fails to report a foreign gift, the Department of Justice can force the school to comply, but only at the request of the Secretary of Education. The Department of Education has never referred this type of case to them—never.

We received two important commitments at the hearing this morning. One is the Department of Education has committed to issuing new guidance to the more than 3,000 schools it oversees. This guidance is important to ensure that schools know that they are obligated to report receiving these foreign government funding sources. They also agreed to step up their enforcement on the law on reporting foreign government funds from Confucius Institutes.

The State Department committed this morning to do more to ensure visas are being properly used at Confucius Institutes around the country. Again, they conducted only two site reviews. They have to do more, and they said they will. We are going to follow up on that.

As with all of our investigations, we are developing legislation aimed at addressing the problems identified here today. I want to call attention, as I conclude, to a news report that came out just a couple of days ago. The Chinese Communist Party's central committee and the Cabinet published a document stating that the Confucius Institutes will remain "a key government policy." Specifically, the news report plans to "optimize" the spread of Confucius Institutes. While it is unclear what "optimize" means at this point, any legislation must try to anticipate the potential rebranding of Confucius Institutes or other efforts that may seek to avoid the transparency, disclosure, and reciprocity that is needed if these programs are to continue on our campuses.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

TRIBUTE TO BRUCE KING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I know my good friend from Georgia has to get somewhere, and I have to get somewhere. I will be very brief.

I want to take a moment to pay tribute. We have staffers here who are just unsung heroes. They work day in and day out. Because of their diligent work, the world and the country is a better place.

One of these people who works in quiet dignity and gets so much done and is so well respected is Bruce King. He has been indispensable at my office, and today, this afternoon, it is my unfortunate duty to say farewell to Bruce.

He has worked in the Senate in some capacity since 1984. He has worked for Judiciary, Senator Lautenberg, the Budget Committee, and as the senior