

deserves special recognition. Maryland was the only state to be represented by more than one finalist in the individual playoff round, and Sarah's efforts to ensure that the students were prepared for this competition are reflected in the team's success. Sarah has taught Mathcounts students for a decade and continues to donate her time and energy to help her students excel.

More than 6,000 schools participate annually in the Mathcounts competition. Since it began in 1983, Mathcounts has had over seven million gifted young math students study in the program and participate in its competitions. Funded by the donations of generous individuals and corporations, the scholarships awarded to the participants provide a strong incentive for young people to commit themselves to an extracurricular program that builds math skills, improves critical thinking, and fosters teamwork. The 17,000 volunteers, like Sarah Manchester, who coach the 500,000 middle school students who participate each year pass on an enthusiasm for mathematics that is rewarding for all those involved.

Madam Speaker, I am honored to commend the students and educators who make Mathcounts such a remarkable and successful program. I ask my colleagues to join me in applauding the efforts of all the Mathcounts participants, and I look forward to watching the program continue to showcase the extraordinary talents of our students and their dedicated teachers in the years to come.

TRIP TO BEIJING, CHINA

HON. FRANK R. WOLF

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 16, 2008

Mr. WOLF. Madam Speaker, over the Fourth of July recess, Representative CHRIS SMITH and I traveled to Beijing, China.

We had become increasingly disturbed by reports of harsh crackdowns by Chinese security forces on the dissident community in the run up to the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing.

Although both Representative SMITH and I have been outspoken critics of the Chinese government over the years, we embarked on this trip with open minds ready to be convinced that the Chinese government had taken steps to improve its abysmal human rights record.

Unfortunately, what we saw while we were on the ground cannot be considered by any stretch of the imagination to be progress.

Upon our arrival, we were informed that the three people that we had invited to have dinner with us that evening were threatened by Chinese security forces not to attend and placed under house arrest. One of these individuals, a prominent human rights lawyer to whom I had presented the National Endowment for Democracy Award just weeks earlier on Capitol Hill, was taken several hours outside of Beijing and detained for the duration of our trip.

I insert two articles for the record from The New York Times and The Washington Post, which further detail the detention of these individuals.

We also visited a "house church," an underground Protestant church which is forced to

operate illegally out of private homes because the Chinese government refuses to recognize these churches as legitimate places of worship.

It was clear that we were being followed to the house church by Chinese security forces so we were only able to stay a short time because we did not want to endanger members of the congregation.

House church members and leaders are often targeted for harassment and detention by the Chinese security forces because they are viewed by the government as a threat to the stability and control of the communist regime.

One example of this repressive policy is Pastor Zhang Rongliang, also known as Uncle Liang. Pastor Zhang is the leader of the China for Christ Church, a network of house churches that is estimated to have over 10 million members throughout China.

Chinese authorities raided Pastor Zhang's home on New Year's Eve 2005 and formally arrested him. He was detained for 6 months without being charged. On June 29, 2006, Pastor Zhang was charged and convicted of fraudulently obtaining border exit documents and sentenced to 7½ years in prison. Pastor Zhang is currently being held at Henan Prison Number One and has reportedly been subjected to electric shock while imprisoned. He suffers from diabetes and hypertension. He is only allowed one 30-minute visit a month from members of his family and prison guards surround him during these visits.

During a two-hour meeting with Ambassador Li Zhaoxing, the former Chinese foreign minister who now chairs the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National People's Congress, Congressman SMITH and I both pressed for the release of detained individuals, such as Pastor Zhang. We presented Ambassador Li with a partial list of political prisoners compiled by the Congressional-Executive Commission on China and asked for the immediate release of all 734 individuals on the list. A copy of this list is available online at www.cecc.gov.

I have met with many former political and religious prisoners and dissidents like Pastor Zhang. These are peaceful people. They are not violent rogues seeking to overthrow the Chinese government. All they ask for is freedom; they yearn for freedom—the freedom to gather together and worship and celebrate and share their religious beliefs.

But the Chinese government will not allow this. They throw their own people in jail and subject them to the most base and violent forms of torture. And despite all this, the government of China was awarded the honor of hosting the 2008 Olympic Games.

In 1988, in the midst of the cold war, President Ronald Reagan publicly addressed religious leaders at the Danilov Monastery in Moscow and called on the Soviet Union to promote religious tolerance.

I call on President Bush to follow the example of Ronald Reagan. While he is in Beijing for the opening ceremonies of the Olympics, he should make a public speech calling on the Chinese government to release all the political and religious dissidents who languish in labor camps and prisons across China.

The people of China, and the dissidents who sit in their jail cells day after day, week after week, year after year, should know that the President of the United States of America and leader of the free world stands with them

in their quest for freedom, and not with the repressive communist regime of China.

[From the Washington Post, July 1, 2008]

U.S. LAWMAKERS DECRY OLYMPICS AFTER
DISSIDENTS BLOCKED

(By Chris Buckley)

BEIJING.—Two U.S. Congressmen on Tuesday urged President George W. Bush to rethink attending the Beijing Olympic Games after they were prevented from meeting Chinese human rights activists.

Republican Congressmen Frank Wolf from Virginia and Chris Smith from New Jersey said they had come to Beijing to meet Chinese citizens pressing for greater political and religious freedoms, including two who recently met the U.S. president.

But Chinese authorities pressured or forced nine activists from meeting them at a dinner on Sunday or subsequently, according to a document handed out by the lawmakers.

They said such actions, and other repressive steps taken by the Chinese Communist Party, have cast a shadow over the Games and over Bush's vow to attend them.

"Tragically, the Olympics has triggered a massive crackdown designed to silence and put beyond reach all those whose views differ from the official 'harmonious' government line," Smith told a news conference held in the U.S. embassy in Beijing.

The friction between the visitors and wary Chinese authorities has underscored the political tensions of the Games, with Beijing under criticism from Western politicians and international rights groups over Tibet, censorship and restrictions on religion and political dissent.

Wolf, who with Smith presented Chinese officials with a list of 734 Chinese prisoners they said were jailed for dissent, said Bush should not attend the Games unless there were big changes.

"I personally believe that unless there's tremendous progress over the next few weeks whereby they release some of these prisoners, I personally do not believe the president should attend. Nor do I think the Secretary of State should attend," said Wolf.

"SIMPLY RIDICULOUS"

China later hit back, saying the politicians' attempted meetings violated the claimed purpose of their visit.

"The two U.S. Congressmen came to China as guests of the United States Embassy to engage in internal communications and consultations," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao told a news conference.

"They should not engage in activities incompatible with the objective of their visit and with their status."

Speaking by telephone before leaving Beijing, Wolf called China's explanation "simply ridiculous" and said he expected the U.S. ambassador to Beijing to take up the issue.

Two of the Chinese citizens who could not meet the lawmakers, Beijing-based lawyers Li Baiguang and Li Heping, met Bush at the White House on June 23 after receiving awards from the U.S. National Endowment for Democracy.

Li Heping said security officers had ostentatiously tailed him and told him not to meet the U.S. politicians. He said by telephone that he was surprised the audience with Bush had not given him and Li Baiguang some immunity.

"He said he was very concerned about human rights and the rule of law in China, especially religious freedom and the freedom of the press," Li Heping said of the meeting.

"He also said that when he comes to Beijing for the Olympics he will raise these issues with President Hu."

Li Baiguang, an evangelical Christian who has now met Bush twice, could not be contacted. His mobile telephone was cut off and

other activists said he has been held by state security police on the outskirts of Beijing.

Wolf said the U.S. government should apply more public pressure to seek the release of jailed Chinese dissidents.

"I think you need to do it publicly," he said. "Frankly, they have to be done the way we used to do it with regard to the Soviet Union."

[From the New York Times, July 2, 2008]

CHINA BLOCKS U.S. LEGISLATORS' MEETING

(By Jim Yardley)

BEIJING.—Two United States congressmen who were in Beijing to lobby for the release of more than 700 political prisoners had hoped to have dinner on Sunday with a group of Chinese human rights lawyers. But security agents had a different idea: they detained some of the lawyers and warned the others to stay away.

The incident is the latest example of how Chinese security agents are increasing pressure on dissidents in advance of the Beijing Olympics in August. The ruling Communist Party has issued broader orders for local governments to defuse public protests, as a violent demonstration involving an estimated 30,000 people erupted last weekend in southwestern China.

In Beijing, a spokesman for the Foreign Ministry said the congressmen, Republicans Frank R. Wolf of Virginia and Christopher H. Smith of New Jersey, had overstepped their visas in arranging to meet the lawyers. The legislators, both sharp critics of China, expressed outrage over the interference by security agents.

"The people we were supposed to have dinner with all got stopped," said Mr. Smith in a telephone interview on Tuesday afternoon. "All of the world is watching, and this kind of behavior doesn't bring anything but more scrutiny to their human rights abuses."

Mr. Wolf called on President Bush to boycott the Olympic opening ceremonies if the detained lawyers were not released and if there was "no progress" on releasing 734 political prisoners on a list the two congressmen presented to the Chinese.

President Bush has been invited to the opening ceremony by Chinese president Hu Jintao and has rejected calls that he not attend.

On Tuesday afternoon, Liu Jianchao, the Foreign Ministry spokesman, said the two legislators, who had travel visas, should not have tried to meet with the lawyers. "They should not intervene in China's internal affairs or conduct something that is harmful to China-U.S. relations," he said during a regular news briefing.

Asked if visiting congressmen must get approval from the Chinese government to meet with private citizens, Mr. Liu added: "The two congressmen applied to come to China to get in touch with the United States consulate. We hope the two U.S. congressmen can respect the country they visit and obey Chinese laws. Regarding the issues on religion and human rights, the exchange between the two countries is more meaningful than meeting private citizens."

The congressmen said they came to Beijing to discuss human rights, religious freedom, the Olympics and Darfur. Mr. Smith said they met Monday with the country's former foreign minister, Li Zhaoxing, and gave him their list of political prisoners. "He took it and said they would look at it," Mr. Smith said. "Our argument is that these people have done nothing wrong."

The guest list at the Sunday night dinner was supposed to include three activist lawyers, Li Baiguang, Teng Biao and Li Heping. They were among this year's winners of the "Democracy Award" by the National Endowment of Democracy in Washington. Li

Baiguang and Li Heping have met with President Bush.

On Sunday afternoon, authorities took Li Baiguang to a Beijing suburb, where he was placed under house arrest, according to Chinese Human Rights Defenders, an advocacy group. Mr. Teng, who was also detained earlier this year, was taken to the same Beijing suburb but later returned to his apartment under house arrest. Another well-known lawyer, Jiang Tianyong, was blocked from leaving his apartment by two Beijing police officers, the advocacy group said. Still another lawyer, Li Fangping, said three police officers were stationed outside his apartment and threatened to follow him wherever he went.

The two representatives did manage to meet with a Chinese pastor, Zhang Mingxuan, but Mr. Smith said security agents placed the pastor under house arrest afterward.

The tightened scrutiny of dissidents comes as China is making broader efforts to increase security and curb public protests as the Olympics draw near. On June 8, the central government held a video conference to launch a national campaign to prevent petition campaigns by disgruntled citizens and to stop demonstrations and other "mass incidents" in the name of preserving harmony for the Olympics.

Localized demonstrations have become common in China, especially in rural areas where peasants protest against illegal land seizures and corruption. Often, peasants organize petition campaigns and travel to Beijing to present their grievances. But authorities, concerned about a potentially embarrassing spectacle during the Games, are calling on local officials to solve problems and prevent petitioners from coming to the capital.

The potential for unexpected protests was illustrated over the weekend when thousands of people burned government buildings in the county of Weng'an in Guizhou Province. China Daily, the official English-language newspaper, reported that 30,000 people participated in a "mass action" after a smaller group protested against possible police malfeasance in handling a case that involved the death of a local teenage girl.

Family members of the girl believe she was killed by relatives of local officials. The riot erupted after the police ruled her death a drowning and cleared the officials' relatives. Rioters burned government buildings and smashed police cars. Paramilitary police have since been dispatched to the county to restore order.

A PROCLAMATION HONORING THE 175TH ANNIVERSARY OF MINERVA, OHIO

HON. ZACHARY T. SPACE

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 16, 2008

Mr. SPACE. Madam Speaker:

Whereas, the village of Minerva, Ohio is celebrating their 175 years of history this July; and

Whereas, the members of the community of Minerva, Ohio are active, enthusiastic members of their area; and

Whereas, Minerva is holding an exciting weekend of tours, garden shows, and historical scenes to commemorate this anniversary; and

Whereas, Minerva continues to be an important and vibrant asset of Southeastern Ohio

and offers an outstanding quality of life to its residents; now, therefore, be it

Resolved that along with the residents of the 18th Congressional District, I commend Minerva, Ohio and its citizens for their unwavering commitment, dedication and contributions to their community and country in recognition of their 175 years.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE
HONORABLE J. BENJAMIN EWING

HON. MICHAEL N. CASTLE

OF DELAWARE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 16, 2008

Mr. CASTLE. Madam Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to recognize the Honorable J. Benjamin Ewing, State Representative for the 35th Representative district for the great State of Delaware. Representative Ewing has represented his district honorably and with great distinction since 1987. However, his public service did not begin then but rather as a young man when he served our country in Korea in the United States Marine Corps and then for 20 years with the Delaware State Police where he rose to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. His work in community service, government and politics has provided Delawareans and the constituents of his district with tremendous peace of mind knowing that an individual of Representative Ewing's stature was always willing to look after the best interest of his constituents while giving them the best possible service.

During my years as Governor and in the U.S. House of Representatives, I have always enjoyed working with Representative Ewing to assist him and the constituents of his district on issues relating to social security, highways, postal service, development, health care, and the many other issues his constituents face on a daily basis. During his career in government, Ben has always put the people of his district first and worked diligently on their behalf. While the people of the 35th Representative District will elect a new Representative this fall, they will have a difficult time finding a Representative as qualified, humble, or one who works as patiently on a daily basis to assist their each and every need.

Ben was instrumental in identifying the need to renovate and develop the new visitors center in Bridgeville, Delaware as a combined State Police barracks, paramedic unit and service center, and as a result it now bears his name. His commitment to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, NRA, American Legion and his Scottish heritage is without question.

I want to publicly thank, recognize and acknowledge Ben Ewing for his many decades of service and numerous contributions to the State of Delaware. He is an excellent role model for those who aspire to serve their community through public service and he has raised the bar for all who follow in his footsteps. While I will miss working with Ben on a regular basis to solve issues facing our constituents, I hope to continue to seek his counsel and advice on issues of importance to all Delawareans. He has been a good friend to me and all Delawareans.