



A Message from the President:

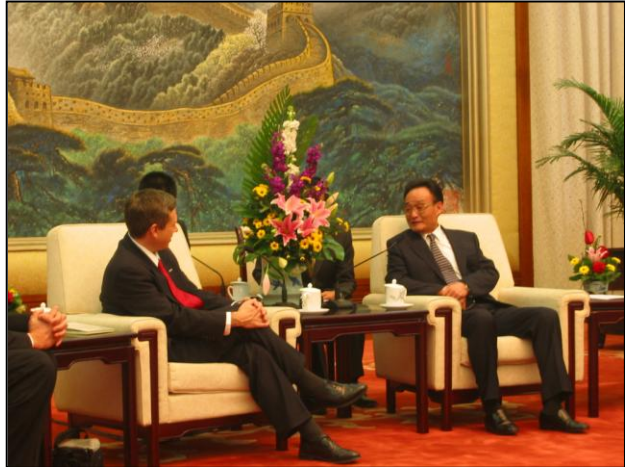
U.S.-China Congressional Working Group Visit to China

CNOOC's failed acquisition of UNOCAL last summer as a result of Congressional objections is a vivid reminder of the importance of the Congress in U.S.-China relations. As I said at our November Members' Meeting, since too many on Capitol Hill do not adequately understand China or U.S.-China relations, there is a valuable role for the National Committee to play in Congressional and leadership education.

The NCUSCR took a major step in this direction in January when, for the first time in many years, it arranged, funded and accompanied a Congressional delegation to China. The delegation was composed of the two co-chairs of the newly formed bipartisan U.S.-China Congressional Working Group, Mark Kirk (R-Ill.) and Rick Larsen (D-Wash.), along with a member of the Group, Tom Feeny (R-Fla.). I accompanied the delegation on the eight-day visit to Beijing, Lanzhou, Jiuquan, Shanghai and Hong Kong.

The quality of the meetings and seniority of our interlocutors demonstrated that our Chinese hosts clearly understood the significance of the Congress in U.S.-China relations and appreciate the role that the Working Group is playing in educating members about China. In Beijing, we met with the chairman of the National People's Congress (NPC), Wu Bangguo, who is second in rank only to President Hu Jintao; the ministers of defense and commerce; the secretary general of the NPC and the chairman of its Foreign Affairs Committee; the governor of Gansu; and the vice ministers of the National Development and Reform Commission and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In addition, the minister counselor/head of Congressional relations in the PRC embassy in Washington accompanied us the entire trip. The Congressmen also welcomed opportunities to hear the frontline perspectives of NCUSCR members, the American business community, the U.S. ambassador and embassy staff.

The Congressmen seized the chance to look beyond the growth and dynamism of Beijing and Shanghai during two days in Gansu province, where over 25 percent of the population lives below the poverty line. A discussion in Lanzhou with Liu Xiaoming, the deputy governor of the province and former deputy chief of mission at the PRC embassy in Washington, helped to put a human face on the development of the west – as did a pick-up basketball game with local students! From Lanzhou our delegation flew to Jiuquan, the beginning of the Great Wall and the staging area for our four-hour drive across the Gobi Desert to the manned space launch facility. Space agency representatives explained that we were the first foreign delegation to tour the facility since manned space flight began in China and that the visit was personally approved by the Minister of Defense. Congressman Feeny, whose district includes the Kennedy Space Center, concluded that the Chinese facility was more modern and practical than ours. After another four-hour drive across the Gobi we returned to Jiuquan, flew back to Lanzhou and then immediately on to Shanghai. A day which began at 6:00 AM with our setting out across the Gobi to see the space center ended at 2:00 AM in Shanghai – so much for Congressional junkets!



Rep. Mark Kirk, co-chair of the U.S.-China Congressional Working Group, and Wu Bangguo, chairman of the National People's Congress.



Among the highlights of our 30-hour stay in Shanghai were meetings with the mayor, chairman of the Municipal People's Congress, U.S. counsel general, and the American business community; a Sunday morning church service; and a seven-minute ride to the airport on Shanghai's new magnetic levitation train. Like all of the senior Chinese officials that we met, Shanghai Mayor Han Zheng was well-briefed, helpful and extremely impressive. One of the lighter moments of the trip was the Mayor's surprise that the U.S. wants to play an exhibition soccer game in Shanghai. "We certainly should be able to field a team to compete with the Americans." And the Congressmen's surprise, "Against the Chicago Bears?" And my insertion, "We are talking about olive ball." And the mayor's immediate understanding, "So we will have to reline our field." If the Seahawks and the Bears play an exhibition game in Shanghai in the next few years, we certainly can say the National Committee helped set it up.

Our final day and a half was spent in Hong Kong, where the Congressmen found the differing views between the democracy movements on the one hand and the government and business community on the other to be striking. We had meetings with Martin Lee and the leaders of the democracy movement, Financial Secretary Henry Tang, the Chief Judge of Hong Kong's High Court, the business community, and the former Hong Kong Chief Executive C.H. Tung.

All three Congressmen were well-prepared, focused and diplomatic throughout the entire trip. They came with a specific agenda and sought to have the Chinese announce during their visit small improvements in U.S.-China relations in the fields of intellectual property rights and space cooperation. The trip was extremely worthwhile and very much appreciated by all: the Congressmen were deeply impressed with the substance and variety of the program we arranged and our Chinese interlocutors uniformly emphasized what an important role the NCUSCR was playing by sponsoring and arranging the trip. The intensive program underscored for us the point that direct contact is a potent means of educating the U.S. Congress.

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