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United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3703

September 13, 2012

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His Excellency Zhang Yesui
Ambassador of China
3505 International Place, N.W.
Washington, DC 20008

Dear Ambassador Zhang,

It has come to my attention that members of your diplomatic staff are trying to restrict free speech rights in Oregon. Specifically, your staff has pushed the mayor of Corvallis, Oregon to remove a mural currently displayed on the side of the MicroTechnology building in downtown Corvallis. I am writing to express my deep displeasure and concern with these actions.

On August 8, the Chinese Consulate General in San Francisco wrote a letter requesting that Corvallis Mayor Julie Manning "adopt effective measures to stop the activities advocating 'Tibet Independence' and 'Taiwan Independence'" in her city. The letter referred specifically to a 10ft by 100ft mural painted by Mr. Chao Tsung-song on a building privately owned by Mr. David Lin. Furthermore, Vice Consul Zhang Hao and Deputy Consul General Song Ruan, flew to Corvallis to further pressure Mayor Manning and City Manager Jim Patterson to remove the mural.

Limitations on speech and expression are incompatible with fundamental human rights anywhere in the world, and an attempt by your representatives to limit freedom of speech in the United States is a grave affront. As you know, the right to freedom of speech, which includes artistic expression, has been enshrined in the Constitution of the United States since 1791. This also includes the right to freedom of religion, of the press, and the right of people to peacefully assemble. While these rights might not be respected in China, they are values that all Americans hold dear. Any attempt by a your government to suppress these rights is unacceptable and must not be repeated.

Tolerance of different political opinions, religious views or philosophies may not always be comfortable or pleasant, but the free exchange of ideas and viewpoints ultimately make for stronger and more vibrant societies, regardless of their historic heritage. Fear of words and expression, as we have all seen recently, is the first step towards violence and wider conflict. I urge you to share that lesson with your colleagues.

The mural will remain so long as the Americans who painted and host it wish it to remain. I trust there will be no further attempt to try and influence any other form of legal, artistic expression in Oregon, or any other U.S. state or territory.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
United States Senator

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