

HONG KONG

Mr. SASSE. Mr. President, I rise today with a heaviness in my heart for what we have seen happening in the last 36 hours in Hong Kong.

Freedom-loving people in Hong Kong for the last 23 years have known basic, fundamental human and natural rights, and we see the Communist Party of China coming in and trying to steal their dignity and to steal their freedom. They live in real and tangible fear of what is going to happen tonight and this weekend and next week.

Yesterday was July 1. July 1 is the anniversary 23 years ago of Hong Kong's return to Chinese sovereignty under the Sino-British Joint Declaration. Under that agreement, the Communist Party of China made a pledge not just to Hongkongers and not just to the British but to the watching world, and they said that it would guarantee—they would guarantee—a certain level of autonomy and freedom to the Hong Kong community and that Hong Kong would not be forced to live under the kind of despotism that the mainland Chinese are forced to experience.

The Communist Party announced to the world, in signing that declaration, that Hongkongers would be retaining a lot of freedom. Well, since that handover in 1997 and, especially since 2003, when there was another attempted national security law debated, the people of Hong Kong have been holding pro-democracy protests and celebrations every year on the July 1 holiday. Annually, on July 1, they have reminded the world of what the pledge was of the Communist Party in that agreement of July 1997.

Yesterday, though, protesting and demanding basic human rights and freedoms in Hong Kong became a crime. Under the new national security law, to speak out, to exercise freedom of assembly, freedom of speech, or freedom of the press issues is considered an act of secession, subversion, and terrorism. That is what the new national security law that the Chinese have forced on Hong Kong stipulates.

Thousands of people—thousands of brave freedom lovers—flooded into the streets anyway, and they celebrated yesterday that anniversary, and they demanded that their representatives who have sold them out to Beijing would continue to testify to the pledges that were made 23 years ago yesterday. At the end of yesterday, several hundred of these freedom-loving protesters were arrested, and 10 of them were charged with suspected violations under the new national security law.

Chinese Government officials now seem to be saying that these folks, these 10, are going to be extradited to mainland China and face their charges there. Remember, the protests that we have seen in Hong Kong over the last 15 or 16 months were specifically because of an extradition law where Hongkongers were facing the threat of

being extradited to mainland China, and, supposedly, according to the government officials in Hong Kong, this rule, this intended legislation was going to be suspended. Well, instead, it looks like it is, in fact, connected to this new national security law.

Yesterday really marks the beginning of a new reign of terror in Hong Kong. With the implementation of this national security law, it is abundantly clear that the Communist Party seeks to turn Hong Kong into a police state no different from Tibet or Xinjiang, and the Hong Kong Government no longer derives any power from the consent of the people who govern, but rather it seeks to rule solely by its cooperation with the CCP's security apparatus.

We are witnessing the signs of the coming crackdown. Even before this law was signed, democracy activists and lawmakers, including Martin Lee, who is Hong Kong's father of democracy and the drafter of Hong Kong's basic law, had already been rounded up. Many are expecting the same fate for themselves in the coming days. Many folks have begun to say goodbye to their families in anticipation that they are going to be rounded up and hauled off into another one of the Chinese re-education camps or whatever Orwellian euphemism we want say for the new and potentially coming Auschwitzes.

Reading over the last several days, I am grieved over what are especially painful and tear-jerking farewell messages from many of these democracy activists in Hong Kong on social media heading up to midnight on June 30, before the new law took effect. My heart ached as I read Joshua Wong tweeting out from the Psalms, in particular Psalm 23:4:

I may walk through valleys as dark as death, but I won't be afraid. You are with me, and your shepherd's rod makes me feel safe.

This was mere hours after announcing that he and other Demosisto members—a democracy political organization—would be closing down their organizations.

Pro-democratic parties and pro-independence parties, like the Hong Kong National Front and Studentlocalism, have announced on social media that they, too, have disbanded and will try to continue their fight for freedom from abroad. But if you read the national security law that the Communist Party is imposing, it looks like they are going to try to claim extraterritorial powers over Hongkongers in exile regarding freedom-of-speech issues in other places in the world as also a violation of this new, tyrannical, Communist Party Chinese law.

Videos of restaurant owners and cafe owners are up on social media. You can see them removing their pro-democracy posters, their signs celebrating the freedom that Hong Kong has known in the past. These folks are tearing down these signs in their own res-

taurants and in their places of assembly because they assume they are likely to be punished under the new national security law if they keep up signs that they have had in their places of business where they were communing and breaking bread over the past many, many years. This serves as a chilling reminder of how the CCP rules through fear, which it ultimately turns into self-censorship.

Hong Kong-based Twitter accounts have been deleted en masse. Individuals fear for their safety if they continue to use the platform, and they fear retribution for previous tweets supporting democracy and accountable government, which is just a fundamental human thing to be able to say or do or talk about or plead for. Like in mainland China, Twitter will undoubtedly become a tool that is reserved only for the oppressors, no longer for the oppressed.

I fear that Joshua's request—"If my voice will not be heard soon, I hope that the international community will continue to speak up for Hong Kong and step up concrete efforts to defend our last bit of freedom"—I fear that Joshua's request will be met with silence.

I fear that we will fail Ronald Reagan's challenge to us that we would be "staunch in our conviction that freedom is not the soul prerogative of the lucky few, but [rather, it is] the unalienable and universal right of all human beings." We are all created in God's image, and our rights come to us from God via nature, not because of the beneficence of some government.

I fear that we in the United States and those in the international community will just simply move on from the kind of imminent crackdown in Hong Kong that we are going to see that is going to have echoes of what happened in Tiananmen Square in June of 1989 and that so many people just decide to allow the Chinese Government to whitewash and pretend never happened. We must not allow that to happen.

I pray that we in this body will live up to our convictions and that we will speak out about what the Communist Party is going to do to the freedom-loving people of Hong Kong.

Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, first, let me make a comment about the remarks from my friend from Nebraska.

It happens that I was in Hong Kong when that happened, and I saw the people, knowing what was going to happen to them after all the promises that were made. Everything that we suspected and dreaded has now happened.

I appreciate the fact that there is somebody who cares enough to bring all of this to the American people.

Mr. SASSE. Mr. President, if the chairman would yield for just one moment.

Mr. INHOFE. Yes.

Mr. SASSE. I would also like to praise the chairman for the work he

does. Flying around the world can be hard on bodies. When you have all the work you have to do at home and you go around the world and you encourage freedom-loving people—I know that many, many wonderful folks in Taiwan who are fearful because of what they see happening in Hong Kong know they have had an advocate in the chairman of the Armed Services Committee for many, many years.

To the people in Taiwan who are also scared at this moment, JIM INHOFE is a heroic speaker. I just want to thank him for the work he has done there.

Mr. INHOFE. Thank you very much. Thank you. I appreciate that.

It has been a tough time here. I would say that he has made my day.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Over the past few days, we have been working on this national defense authorization bill. It is one that we pass every year and have passed every year for 60 years.

My colleagues have done good work on this bill so far. We took requests very seriously. We put hundreds of them in this bill. We actually did. Over 700 of the papers and amendments have been put in this bill. One of the reasons we wanted to do this is because—we didn't used to do it, but we actually did this time. A problem that existed last year didn't exist this year. There is resistance on the floor to getting amendments. That resistance has gone now, and I think we are going to be able to do it.

This bill was written by the Democrats and Republicans in the U.S. Senate, and they did a very good job. When you stop to consider that we have as many—we actually have over 700 amendments that are now a part of this bill. This was made by the Members here, not by any other group. It is not the way it has always been done.

We had a great markup. In fact, our markup ended up—I call it unanimous because it was passed by 25 to 2, and the 2 who voted against it are not big on the military anyway. I call it unanimous. That is unusual—unusual—to get a bill this size to pass unanimously out of a committee to the Senate floor.

This is going to happen today. I feel very good about the progress we are making. When we come back from this Fourth of July recess, we are going to be able to finish it, and it should be in good shape.

In a few moments, I will be asking for unanimous consent on adoption of the managers' package and to make six amendments in order. By my estimation, this is the first time in at least the last few years that we have really considered and voted on this many individual amendments on the floor.

I have to say something about Senator REED. Sure, we differ on some things, but it has always been that we have reached agreement on virtually every issue. I was glad we had agreement on amendments. We were pushing hard to have even many more amendments. We wanted to consider as many

as possible. We wanted every Member to have a say in this bill, and that is exactly what happened. I am glad we were able to reach a bipartisan path forward to complete consideration of this bill right after the recess, and that is exactly what we are going to do.

I have gone over a lot of the reasons this bill is so important over the past week, so I will keep it simple. Here is why we need to pass this bill:

First of all, it gives our troops a needed and deserved raise. It is out there.

It authorizes more than 30 kinds of special pay for our troops at various levels of hazard—things that haven't been done before.

It makes sure our military families—this is the big thing. I have a very close friend in here who was talking about the fact that—on the floor—the main problem we are facing in our Nation as a threat is China and Russia. He made the comment and observation that, yet, we spend more on the military than the two of them put together. That is true, but I did want to remind him—and I did on the floor yesterday—that there is a reason for that. The reason for that is the most expensive thing we have in the military that we deal with every year are people. We take care of people.

I remember last year that one of the main thrusts of our bill was to get all of those housing things that were privatized 10 years before and that hadn't been performing very well—to take care of our troops and their families. We spent time doing that. You take a Communist country like China or Russia—they don't care about the troops. They give them a gun and say: Go out and kill people. No wonder we have to spend more. That is the reason we are going to continue to do that, and this bill does that.

There are countries out there that hate everything America stands for and want to do us harm. We know that is right. I sometimes get tickled when I hear people talking about, well, we don't want to do this because that is going to upset them. We don't want to keep Gitmo open because that might upset the terrorists. Well, welcome to the real world.

So this gives our troops the equipment, the training, and the resources they need to defend this Nation.

I never want to put ourselves in the position where we have a fair fight in America. We don't want fair fights. We want to go into combat with a clear advantage over our adversaries, and this bill does that.

It makes sure that the Pentagon is situated to support our troops wherever they are, but it also protects taxpayer dollars and ensures accountability to the taxpayers. That is very important, and this bill does that.

This bill also does a lot of good things we all support. That is why we are passing the bill today. It is a no-brainer. It is not a matter of if we are going to pass it; it is a matter of when.

It is now down to the hours. It will be set up so that when we come back from the recess, we will be able to pass this bill.

Keep in mind, we pass it, and that is not the end because the House has to pass their bills, and, of course, then the President will sign the bill. We go into conference with the House and the Senate, and before the President signs the bill, we have to have not just a conference, but very likely it will go to the Big Four. If it does that, that is another process. Very likely, it could be November when we actually end up passing this bill. Our absolute deadline has always been December 31. We will be well in advance of that.

I know the President has strong feelings about one of the provisions of the bill. He says if that is in there, he will veto the bill. We all know what that is. It is controversial. It is the Warren amendment that was put in. I have to say this: All but one Republican oppose that. I have to say that so people will hear it and understand it because that is true.

Anyway, passing the bill is not a matter of if; it is going to pass. This is a very good bill. It is a must-pass bill. One of the things that happen with a must-pass bill is that everyone who can't get their bills on other interest areas passed—they know this bill is going to pass, so they try to put in amendments. We have taken a lot of the amendments that have nothing to do with defense, but nonetheless we know it is necessary. It has been necessary for 60 years. This is nothing new.

I would remind our colleagues that we have a long way to go yet. We will make sure that the conference report is a bipartisan one when we get to that point so that both parties can support it. It is exactly what we have right now. I have to say, with Senator REED—we very carefully weighed our portions of the bill, as well as amendments, to make sure we were fair to both sides—both the Republicans and Democrats—and that is the product we have in front of us.

From the brave patriots who fought for our Nation nearly 250 years ago to the 2.1 million who serve today, this bill is by them and for them.

This weekend, as you celebrate Independence Day, think about what this holiday stands for. Think about what it takes to protect the freedoms we celebrate.

There is no doubt in my mind that this bill will give our troops what they need. The bill will make American families safer and will enable us to stand up for our democratic values around the world. We will be passing this bill and will be very proud of it.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.