

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOZMAN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

HONG KONG AUTONOMY ACT

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, I am here on the Senate floor with my colleague from Maryland. I am here this morning, in part, to condemn the Chinese Communist Party's actions, their efforts to swallow Hong Kong into the mainland and silence the dissent of the people of Hong Kong, but I am also here to do something about that.

For decades, Hong Kong has been one of the most successful, thriving societies on the planet. An indispensable part of their success has been their freedom. Hong Kong has enjoyed a vibrant free press, free speech, freedom to worship. They have had an independent judiciary and a partially democratic electoral representative system of government for a long time now.

Hong Kong is one of the freest places in Asia and, because of these freedoms and the Hong Kong people's natural entrepreneurial spirit, Hong Kong is just one of the most successful and vibrant cities there has ever been.

Yet for years—maybe because of this—the Chinese Communist Party has pursued a systematic campaign to snuff out these basic freedoms in Hong Kong and bring the Hongkongers who live there into line. The intensity of the Chinese Communist Party's aggression appears to be growing by the day.

Their campaign shouldn't be very surprising. Just look at the recent actions: the genocidal action toward the Uighurs in Xinjiang or the aggressive action toward neighboring countries in the South China Sea—or toward the entire world, since the COVID-19 virus was first detected in Wuhan and the Chinese Government lied to us about its nature.

Fundamental principles, such as freedom and transparency, the just rule of law—these ideas are entirely antithetical to the core of the Chinese Communist Party's mission. I think that, several years from now, we are going to look back on July 1 of 2020 as a milestone in the Chinese Communist Party's aggression and hostility toward Hong Kong.

Yesterday was the first day that the Chinese Communist Party's new so-called national security law went into effect. News reports described the law as “tailor-made to bring Hong Kong's massive pro-democracy movement to heel.”

This picture was taken within the last 48 hours—thousands and thousands of people of Hong Kong taking to the streets to simply demand their freedoms—peacefully—to protest, to insist that they continue to have the freedoms that help make their society such a great society.

Tragically, 300 of these people were arrested last night simply because they were protesting the Chinese Com-

munist Party. Some of the arrests were made because Hongkongers possessed items that called for Hong Kong's independence. That is right—people arrested simply for holding a sign, arrested for holding a flag. Among them was a 15-year-old girl—a 15-year-old girl. Her crime: She held a flag that said “Hong Kong independence.” Another was a 19-year-old young man. His crime was that he had a pro-democracy sticker on his phone. Imagine—the nerve of wanting to have self-determination and expressing that with a sticker on your phone. So he was arrested.

His parents attempted to visit their son in jail and bring him dinner, and the police refused their visit. It is not at all clear if this young man will be able to get out even on bail.

So the Chinese Communist Party has very rapidly started enforcing this new law, and I think it is because they realize what is at stake. They know that the people of Hong Kong fervently believe in the importance of an open and free society. They believe in and they want the ability to practice liberal values, and they want a system of transparent, accountable government, one that is elected by and responsive to the people.

See, the vision of the people of Hong Kong for their own city, for their society, is anathema to the Chinese Communist Party because the Chinese Communist Party's deepest fear is that mainland Chinese citizens will demand the freedoms that Hongkongers enjoy, and that quest for freedom on the mainland would pose an unacceptable risk to the authoritarian control of the Communist regime.

So the Chinese Communist Party is cracking down. We have been witnessing it just in recent hours. This new so-called national security law was unilaterally imposed on the people of Hong Kong without any input from the people of Hong Kong, and that is in direct contravention to Chinese commitments to Hong Kong and the international community. The law was also purposefully written in a very vague and ambiguous manner, designed to essentially criminalize any behavior or speech on the part of a resident of Hong Kong that the Chinese Communist Party does not approve of.

Now, the law may be ambiguous, but the message behind it is not. If a 19-year-old can now be imprisoned for having a sticker on his phone or a 15-year-old girl can be imprisoned for having a flag, then no one is safe, and that is the message that Beijing wants to send to the people of Hong Kong: We can arrest you. We can imprison you if you misbehave. So think twice about what you say, where you go, with whom you meet, what you read, what you write. Maybe even think twice about what you think.

This law, sadly, looks like it means the end of Hong Kong's autonomy and the freedoms which underpin its social and economic vibrancy. And we are

seeing the effects: As I said, hundreds of arrests that occurred just yesterday as tens of thousands of courageous Hongkongers—here we see some of them—poured into the streets to shout and chant and demonstrate peacefully, to tell the Chinese Communist Party that they are not going to back down.

We have also seen Hongkongers who have been forced to scrub their social media history, booksellers who were intending to remove books from their shelves, Hong Kong pro-democracy political figures saying that they have to lessen their activism and rethink their strategy.

How can you blame them? How can you blame them? They could face years in prison if the Hong Kong authorities, at the bidding of the people in Beijing, choose to target them.

I think we can fully expect independent media voices in Hong Kong to be shuttered and Beijing's censorship and surveillance apparatus to flourish in the coming months and years.

The fact is, Hong Kong's vibrancy is being throttled by the Chinese Communist Party.

So I am on the Senate floor today to request passage of a piece of legislation that responds to this. I am pleased to report it has already received unanimous support from both Chambers of Congress. I introduced this legislation with my colleague Senator VAN HOLLEN of Maryland to create real penalties on those responsible for this campaign by the Chinese Communist Party to end Hong Kong's free way of life.

It is called the Hong Kong Autonomy Act, and the bill would impose mandatory sanctions on anyone involved in taking action to attack the basic freedoms that were promised to the people of Hong Kong.

Critically, our legislation also takes another step. It penalizes banks that choose to finance the erosion of Hong Kong's autonomy, banks that would put marginal profits ahead of the basic human rights of the people of Hong Kong.

I am really pleased that we are here this morning. I think we are on the verge of sending this legislation to the President's desk because America needs to take meaningful steps like this to push back on the Chinese Communist Party.

We should remember that this aggression toward Hong Kong is not limited to Hong Kong. The Chinese Communist Party is intent to spread its influence and power worldwide, and in the process, it is meant to simultaneously undermine and challenge free and open societies. I should point out that the spread of the Chinese Communist Party influence around the world poses a very real threat to us, to Americans, to our national and economic interests.

That is part of why the Hong Kong Autonomy Act is so important. It is not only an effort to shield freedom-loving Hongkongers from this continuing escalation of aggression by the

Chinese Communists, but the bill is a larger signal to China. It is a message that the United States and the free world are no longer willing to look past some of the worst behavior that has been occurring. It is a message that our patience has run out.

China is being warned to expect stiff resistance—stiff resistance to stealing American intellectual property, to committing genocide against religious minorities like the Uighurs, to militarizing artificial islands and infringing on other nations' sovereign waters, and trampling on the basic freedoms of the people of Hong Kong.

I could go on, but suffice it to say that this is occurring in the context of a great battle—the great battle about what model the world is going to pursue. Will the citizens of the United States and other democratic nations around the world continue to foster the liberal democratic model that spread around the world after World War II, with open societies, the just rule of law, greater economic freedom underpinned by respect for private property, basic human rights like the freedom of speech and the freedom of a free press and the freedom to worship?

All of the prosperity and the elevation of human dignity that comes from human freedom and democratic values from our model—that is the model that is up against the dark shadows of the authoritarian governments that are constantly pushing to systematically erode, corrode, and warp the values and freedoms that we cherish. Through this bill, the U.S. Senate makes clear which side we are on.

At this point, I would like to yield to the Senator from Maryland.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I want to salute my friend and colleague, the Senator from Pennsylvania, Mr. TOOMEY, for his remarks and for his leadership on this very vital issue of standing up for the rights and freedom of people in Hong Kong and, as he said, sending a signal to others around the world who would seek to stamp out human rights and political freedom.

When Senator TOOMEY and I saw that the Chinese Communist Party was taking its more recent steps to crack down on freedom in Hong Kong, we introduced the Hong Kong Autonomy Act. That act just passed the U.S. Senate unanimously last week and was sent to the House of Representatives.

This is a very fast turnaround from either of the Chambers in the U.S. Congress. I want to thank Speaker PELOSI and her Republican partner and all the Democrats and Republicans in the House of Representatives for coming together so quickly on this legislation.

The legislation before us made a technical fix to the bill that Senator TOOMEY and I introduced in which this Senate passed out last week a technical fix to comply with the constitutional requirements as to where a bill that might generate revenue begins.

With that technical fix, Speaker PELOSI and the Republican leadership sent it right back. Why did they send it right back so quickly? Because this is an urgent moment. In fact, our timing could not be more critical. On Tuesday, President Xi imposed a national security law on Hong Kong by fiat. It was only after the law was passed that Beijing unveiled its provisions. Even Hong Kong's Chief Executive and President Xi loyalist, Carrie Lam, said she hadn't been allowed to see a draft before the law's passage.

As Senator TOOMEY indicated, this law is written broadly enough that it will criminalize speech and peaceful assembly. Anybody who publishes anti-Beijing viewpoints could be punished by life in prison. Saying anything seen to be undermining the ruling Communist Party's authority would be a violation.

This is consistent with mainland China's approach, which has virtually eliminated independent journalism and severely restricted NGOs.

Here are some highlights of the law that was just passed—I should say, imposed. It now mandates that the Hong Kong Government undertake “national security education” in school, social organizations, and media outlets. The law mandates that anyone entering public office in Hong Kong swear allegiance to Beijing.

What is more, the law applies to anyone, anywhere. It can even apply to offenses committed outside the region by a person who is not a permanent resident of the region. That means a U.S. citizen penning an editorial that argues for sanctions against China could technically fall afoul of the new law for “inciting hatred” against Beijing. Legal experts believe this is even broader than the Chinese criminal law applied in mainland China.

Senator TOOMEY said, despite this—despite this threat, despite passage of a law that would punish people for up to life imprisonment for expressing their views, thousands of protesters took to the streets yesterday and staged the largest rally in Hong Kong this year. Hundreds of Hong Kong police officers moved in swiftly to quash dissent and implement the law. Police fired tear gas, pepper spray, and water cannons to disperse the protesters.

The police then issued a statement that noted some protesters were chanting “Hong Kong independence, the only way out.” The statement said such slogans are “suspected to be inciting or abetting others to commit secession” and may violate the new law.

The United States must stand with the people of Hong Kong. That is what this bill says. This bill says we stand with the people of Hong Kong.

As Senator TOOMEY indicated, it would impose mandatory sanctions on individuals in firms who violate China's obligations to the people of Hong Kong under the joint declaration and the basic law—rights of freedom of speech and equality before the law,

freedom of association, and the right from arbitrary or unlawful arrest, detention, and imprisonment. It goes beyond that to impose mandatory sanctions on banks that do business with individuals who are complicit in undermining these freedoms and the rights of the people of Hong Kong.

I am glad we acted quickly. As you can see, the Government of China is moving by the day to squash the rights and freedoms of the people of Hong Kong. We need to move with urgency to send a statement that we stand with the people of Hong Kong.

In a moment, I am going to be joining my colleague, Senator TOOMEY, in asking for unanimous consent. Before I turn it back over to him, let me just say, assuming we get that—and it looks like we will—I hope President Trump will sign this immediately—immediately.

As a country, Republicans and Democrats together need to send a strong signal that we will not stand for the actions of Beijing, undermining their own agreements—agreements under international law, which they are bound to, and we will not stand still in silence and do nothing while they crack down on freedom in Hong Kong.

I yield to Senator TOOMEY from Pennsylvania.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, again, let me stress how grateful I am for the passionate, persuasive, and very effective advocacy of Senator VAN HOLLEN throughout this entire effort. I am very grateful to him, as I am to other colleagues who helped make this happen.

As in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 7440, which was received from the House.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 7440) to impose sanctions with respect to foreign persons involved in the erosion of certain obligations of China with respect to Hong Kong, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (H.R. 7440) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

Mr. TOOMEY. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.