

I talked to a small business owner the other day who can't get their loan from the SBA. Small business owners are paying the price. And when they pay the price, so do their employees. In my own State of Ohio, 8,000 civilian employees were furloughed from Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, the people that protect our country. They are paying the price for your leverage. These are real people, not bargaining chips.

They have real jobs. They have important things they do to serve our country. They are not bargaining chips for your political leverage.

Republicans have voted time and time again to reopen government, cleanly, responsibly, and without games—the same thing that we asked you to do. I have voted 14 times. My colleagues and I on this side of the aisle have voted 14 times to reopen the government. It is not unprecedented to pass a clean CR to reopen the government. In fact, during the Biden administration, when Republicans didn't run this Chamber, they compromised with Democrats and voted 13 times to pass a clean CR to keep the government open, the same thing we have asked you to do 14 times, and you said no.

There is a way forward right now though. We can pass a funding bill today—today—get workers paid, keep America running, and then pair it with the firm commitment that has been given to debate and vote on the policies that divide us.

That is how grownups govern, by the way. That is how grownups are supposed to do this. We don't always get our way. We debate it; we fight for our values; and we vote. And sometimes we win, and sometimes we lose. That is what the majority leader of this body JOHN THUNE, who is a man of his word, has said he would do.

My Democrat colleagues say they don't want to give up their leverage in funding government until all of their demands are met. But let's be abundantly clear, it is not Republicans. It is not Republicans that you are hurting with this strategy. It is the American people, the American taxpayer, the American taxpayer that is paying for a government that is not serving them. They are the ones. They are the ones that your strategy is hurting.

And I say this with all sincerity. I want to offer a perspective because, yes, I am fired up about this. I am frustrated by it. I think it is wrong, but I want to fix it. So I want to offer this perspective.

If leverage was your goal, you got as much leverage now as you are ever going to get. It is never going to get better than this. The shutdown has lasted 38 days. Do you really think you will have more leverage after 48 days or 58 days? You won't.

It is just a matter of how much more suffering you will cause until it comes to an end. When will enough be enough? How much suffering must occur before you decide to vote with us to open up the government?

I am not asking you to abandon your principles. I would never do that. Everybody here stands on their principles. They argue. They fight for what they want. I would never ask you to abandon your principles.

If you want to defend Biden's COVID-era bonuses that prop up a broken ObamaCare system, then keep fighting, if that is what you believe. It is not working.

You can propose your own legislation—which I would prefer that you propose some bipartisan legislation that the majority leader of this Chamber, I believe, will take up to vote. It is time for you to take yes for an answer to work with us to solve these problems.

I wasn't here, neither was the Presiding Officer, when all the ObamaCare legislation was passed, nor was I here when the Democrats voted to set an expiration date of 2025 for the subsidies that they now say they want to renew. They set the expiration date.

But I am here now. I want to fix it. I want to get some results. But those policies, those ObamaCare policies, have contributed to increasing healthcare costs that are the biggest driver of inflation in the 21st century.

Look at this chart. This is the cost of consumer goods, services, that have increased from 2000 to 2024. Hospital service is No. 1, medical services on this chart. Healthcare inflation is the most dramatic form of inflation that this Nation has experienced in the 21st century, and it is due to ObamaCare policies.

Those are the facts, and that is the reality. I didn't create the problem. Many people in this Chamber didn't create the problem. But I want to help solve the problem. I want to reduce the cost of healthcare.

When the government shutdown ends, I am happy to be one of the people that works on solving the problem that others created. We want to fix this. We want people to be able to afford healthcare, but the way we do that is to drive down the costs.

I want to work with anyone in this Chamber that will change that, to eliminate the fraud that has filled up this ACA system, to target the benefits to those who truly need them, and to create an insurance market that doesn't rely on endless taxpayer subsidies—create something that works, reduce the cost of providing healthcare in this country.

And I say this: For the love of God and country, stop making the American people suffer while we wait to do this. Bring it to an end. Open the government.

Let's work together to reduce the cost of healthcare and make it more affordable, because the truth is, you have no more leverage today than you did on day one. In fact, you have less, because there is less time to negotiate the items you claim to care about. There is less time today to negotiate it than when this all started.

So it is a matter of urgency. Let's get this done. Let's get the government open, and let's get to work.

It is the longest government shutdown in American history. We can't change what happened in the past 38 days, but we can change the future. We can end this today. Right now, today, we can end this. Let's get back to work.

The American people expect their leaders to solve problems, not to stage them, not to create them, which is what has happened during this government shutdown. It is long past time to reopen the government, to restore trust, and to prove that the Senators in this Chamber can lead. That is the question that needs to be resolved, and it needs to be resolved today. It is time to reopen the government.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

EXPRESSING CONDEMNATION OF THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY'S PERSECUTION OF RELIGIOUS MINORITY GROUPS

Mr. CRUZ. Madam President, I rise today to speak about a grave matter and a clear violation of religious freedom, human dignity, and the rule of law.

In China, Christians are fighting daily for their religious freedom against the Chinese Communist Party. And on October 10, 2025, the Chinese Communist Party launched the largest coordinated nationwide crackdown in more than four decades against a Christian urban house church in China.

In that sweep, 23 pastors and church members of the Zion Church, one of China's largest underground congregations, were arrested and wrongfully detained, including Pastor Ezra Jin.

Pastor Jin and the members of the Zion Church were not engaged in violence. They were worshiping. They were serving God. And for that action, they are being treated as enemies of the communist state.

Last week, I introduced a bipartisan, bicameral resolution to condemn the abduction of Pastor Jin and the Zion Church leaders and to demand their immediate release. This resolution is designed to pressure Chinese leadership to release the congregation members and to let them practice their Christian faith freely. It sends a message that faith is not a crime, and a government that fears its citizens' faith is nothing more than an oppressive tyranny.

Pastor Jin's daughter and her husband Bill, a native Houstonian, wrote about the CCP's persecution in the Washington Post this past week. In their column, they made a piercing observation, and I want to share it here in full:

There were few more obvious ways to showcase the bankruptcy of an ideology—and the vitality of the Christian faith—than by forcing peaceful believers to suffer for the sake of their convictions.

This is a profound truth. China, like other communist regimes before it, utterly despises the fact that there is and always has been a higher authority than the state itself. In its effort to bring every aspect of society under brutal government control, the CCP uses state power to drive fear into the hearts of its citizens. History has shown that these tactics will fail, and the persecuted church will only grow stronger.

The Apostle Paul reminds us that God gave us not a spirit of fear but of power and of love. I know that that same spirit—one of power and of love—is what the church in China is fighting with.

I urge my colleagues to join me in passing this resolution unanimously to show our support for Pastor Jin, his family, and his fellow believers, and to show the world that the United States stands on the side of freedom, on the side of faith, and we stand with the persecuted Christians in China.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Foreign Relations Committee be discharged from further consideration and the Senate now proceed to S. Res. 463.

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 463) expressing condemnation of the Chinese Communist Party's persecution of religious minority groups, including Christians, Muslims, and Buddhists and the detention of Pastor "Ezra" Jin Mingri and leaders of the Zion Church, and reaffirming the United States' global commitment to promote religious freedom and tolerance.

There being no objection, the committee was discharged and the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. CRUZ. I ask unanimous consent that the Cruz substitute amendment to the resolution be considered and agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment, in the nature of a substitute, was agreed to as follows:

(Purpose: In the nature of a substitute)

Strike all after the resolving clause and insert the following:
That the Senate—

(1) strongly condemns the Chinese Communist Party's persecution of religious minority groups, including Pastor "Ezra" Jin Mingri and other leaders and members of Zion Church and other faith communities;

(2) reaffirms the commitment of the United States to promote religious freedom and tolerance around the world and to help provide protection and relief to religious minorities facing persecution and violence;

(3) calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all detained members of Zion Church, including Pastor Jin, and all other wrongfully detained religious practitioners in China;

(4) calls for the Government of the People's Republic of China to cease its harassment and intimidation of the relatives of Zion Church members and their relatives, including tactics of transnational repression overseas;

(5) calls on the Government of the People's Republic of China to release all other arbi-

trarily detained religious believers, including Uyghur Muslims, Tibetan Buddhists, and other Christians; and

(6) demands that the Government of the People's Republic of China—

(A) respect the internationally recognized human right to freedom of religion or belief; and

(B) end all forms of violence and discrimination against religious minority groups and entities.

Mr. CRUZ. Madam President, I know of no further debate on the resolution, as amended.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

Hearing no further debate, the question is on adoption of the resolution, as amended.

The resolution (S. Res. 463), as amended, was agreed to.

Mr. CRUZ. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Cruz substitute amendment to the preamble be agreed to; that the preamble, as amended, be agreed to; and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment to the preamble, in the nature of a substitute, was agreed to as follows:

(Purpose: To amend the preamble)

Strike the preamble and insert the following:

Whereas, on October 10, 2025, international news outlets reported that the Chinese Communist Party (referred to in this preamble as the "CCP") detained Pastor "Ezra" Jin Mingri, who is the founder of Zion Church, from his home in Guangxi Province, China;

Whereas CCP authorities also arrested nearly 30 other pastors and church members from Zion Church;

Whereas 23 members of Zion Church remain in detention centers, while other members have been released on bail, and still others are being harassed and intimidated by Chinese authorities;

Whereas the CCP's actions mark the largest coordinated, nationwide crackdown against an unregistered Christian house church network in more than 40 years;

Whereas thousands of Zion Church members and millions of Christians and other religious adherents who reside in the People's Republic of China seek to peacefully worship God and care for their neighbors without the threat or fear of persecution;

Whereas the imprisonment of Pastor Jin is the latest instance of CCP persecution of a large number of religious minorities, including Christians, Muslim Uyghurs, Hui Muslims, and Tibetan Buddhists;

Whereas, since coming to power in 2012, CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping has escalated a campaign to "sinicize" religion in China by—

(1) allowing authorities to burn bibles, imprison believers, and tear down Christian crosses; and

(2) forcing religious organizations and adherents to conform to the ideology of the CCP;

Whereas, under the policy of sinicizing religion, the Government of China has—

(1) ordered the removal of crosses from Catholic and Protestant churches;

(2) censored religious texts;

(3) imposed CCP-approved religious materials;

(4) replaced images of Jesus Christ or the Virgin Mary with pictures of Xi Jinping; and

(5) instructed clergy to preach CCP ideology;

Whereas, in 2021, the Trump administration determined the CCP—

(1) had committed crimes against humanity and genocide against predominantly Muslim Uyghurs and members of other ethnic and religious minority groups, including ethnic Kazakhs and ethnic Kyrgyz; and

(2) has continued to subject religious minority groups in China to restrictions on religious practices and freedom of expression, arbitrary imprisonment, forced sterilization torture, and forced labor;

Whereas the CCP has made consistent efforts to erode the religious, linguistic, and cultural identity of Tibetans, including by—

(1) closing Buddhist monasteries and limiting entry or practitioners;

(2) forcibly disappearing and arbitrarily detaining Tibetans for practicing their religious beliefs;

(3) censoring religious content online; and

(4) expanding the use of boarding schools to indoctrinate children in CCP-approved curricula and Mandarin Chinese;

Whereas Congress unanimously passed the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-292), which established, as the official policy of the United States—

(1) to condemn violations of religious freedom;

(2) to promote, and assist other governments in the promotion of, the fundamental right to freedom of religion;

(3) to stand for liberty and with the persecuted;

(4) to use and implement appropriate tools in the United States foreign policy apparatus, including diplomatic, political, commercial, charitable, educational, and cultural channels; and

(5) to promote respect for religious freedom by all governments and peoples;

Whereas, under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom has designated the People's Republic of China as a "country of particular concern for religious freedom" every year since 1999;

Whereas Congress unanimously passed the Frank R. Wolf International Religious Freedom Act (Public Law 114-281) in 2016 to enhance the capabilities of the United States to advance religious liberty globally through diplomacy, training, counterterrorism, and foreign assistance;

Whereas the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act (subtitle F of title XII of Public Law 114-328), enacted by Congress in 2016, gives the President the authority to impose targeted sanctions on individuals responsible for committing human rights violations;

Whereas the People's Republic of China is a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in Paris on December 10, 1948, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted in New York on December 19, 1966, which recognize freedom of religion as an internationally-recognized human right;

Whereas Article 36 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China explicitly states that citizens of the People's Republic of China enjoy freedom of religious belief; and

Whereas the United States must show strong international leadership when it comes to the advancement of religious freedoms, liberties, and protections: Now, therefore, be it

The preamble, as amended, was agreed to.

The resolution, as amended, with its preamble, as amended, reads as follows:

S. RES. 463

Whereas, on October 10, 2025, international news outlets reported that the Chinese Communist Party (referred to in this preamble as the “CCP”) detained Pastor “Ezra” Jin Mingri, who is the founder of Zion Church, from his home in Guangxi Province, China;

Whereas CCP authorities also arrested nearly 30 other pastors and church members from Zion Church;

Whereas 23 members of Zion Church remain in detention centers, while other members have been released on bail, and still others are being harassed and intimidated by Chinese authorities;

Whereas the CCP’s actions mark the largest coordinated, nationwide crackdown against an unregistered Christian house church network in more than 40 years;

Whereas thousands of Zion Church members and millions of Christians and other religious adherents who reside in the People’s Republic of China seek to peacefully worship God and care for their neighbors without the threat or fear of persecution;

Whereas the imprisonment of Pastor Jin is the latest instance of CCP persecution of a large number of religious minorities, including Christians, Muslim Uyghurs, Hui Muslims, and Tibetan Buddhists;

Whereas, since coming to power in 2012, CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping has escalated a campaign to “sinicize” religion in China by—

(1) allowing authorities to burn bibles, imprison believers, and tear down Christian crosses; and

(2) forcing religious organizations and adherents to conform to the ideology of the CCP;

Whereas, under the policy of sinicizing religion, the Government of China has—

(1) ordered the removal of crosses from Catholic and Protestant churches;

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(4) replaced images of Jesus Christ or the Virgin Mary with pictures of Xi Jinping; and

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Whereas, in 2021, the Trump administration determined the CCP—

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(2) has continued to subject religious minority groups in China to restrictions on religious practices and freedom of expression, arbitrary imprisonment, forced sterilization torture, and forced labor;

Whereas the CCP has made consistent efforts to erode the religious, linguistic, and cultural identity of Tibetans, including by—

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ratus, including diplomatic, political, commercial, charitable, educational, and cultural channels; and

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Whereas Article 36 of the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China explicitly states that citizens of the People’s Republic of China enjoy freedom of religious belief; and

Whereas the United States must show strong international leadership when it comes to the advancement of religious freedoms, liberties, and protections: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) strongly condemns the Chinese Communist Party’s persecution of religious minority groups, including Pastor “Ezra” Jin Mingri and other leaders and members of Zion Church and other faith communities;

(2) reaffirms the commitment of the United States to promote religious freedom and tolerance around the world and to help provide protection and relief to religious minorities facing persecution and violence;

(3) calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all detained members of Zion Church, including Pastor Jin, and all other wrongfully detained religious practitioners in China;

(4) calls for the Government of the People’s Republic of China to cease its harassment and intimidation of the relatives of Zion Church members and their relatives, including tactics of transnational repression overseas;

(5) calls on the Government of the People’s Republic of China to release all other arbitrarily detained religious believers, including Uyghur Muslims, Tibetan Buddhists, and other Christians; and

(6) demands that the Government of the People’s Republic of China—

(A) respect the internationally recognized human right to freedom of religion or belief; and

(B) end all forms of violence and discrimination against religious minority groups and entities.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

MEDAL OF HONOR ACT

Mr. CRUZ. Madam President, I rise today to honor a very special group of Americans—the soldiers, the sailors,

the marines, and the airmen who have fought bravely for this Nation, but who have received the very highest distinction that any member of the Armed Forces can earn, the Medal of Honor.

Since 1863, Presidents of the United States have awarded the Medal of Honor to more than 3,500 of the bravest men and women ever to wear the uniform of this Nation. Each one has demonstrated valor, gallantry, and heroism above and beyond the call of duty, with acts so selfless, so extraordinary that they stand as beacons of courage for future generations.

In 1960, Congress passed Public Law 6556, establishing the Army and Navy Medal of Honor Roll and entitling each Medal of Honor recipient to a modest special pension of \$10 per month for life.

Over time, that monthly amount has gradually increased from \$10 to \$100, to what stands today at approximately \$1,400 per month.

But let’s pause and think about that: \$1,400 a month for those who risked everything—their safety, their future, their very lives for freedom, for the opportunity for all of us to be here today.

Today, there are 61 living Medal of Honor recipients, 61 men who faced unthinkable odds, who put their country before themselves so that the rest of us could live in peace. We cannot truly ever repay them. There is no sum, there is no medal, there are no words that can measure up to their sacrifice. But there are ways that we can continue to honor them, by ensuring that they are cared for, respected, and supported.

In January of this year, I introduced the Medals Act, my legislation to raise the monthly pension for Medal of Honor recipients. This legislation is a way for this Nation to say: We see you, we remember you, and we will not forget what you have done.

Many of these heroes spend their time traveling the country, speaking to schoolchildren, visiting military hospitals, and strengthening the very fabric of America.

This monetary increase will allow them to continue those efforts and to reach more communities, mentor more veterans, and remind all of us about the cost of freedom.

And I would like to take a moment to recognize nine Medal of Honor recipients who currently live in the Lone Star State. We honor them, and we cherish them.

I would also like to recognize the 139 Medal of Honor recipients who were either born in, entered the service from, or died in Texas. These are America’s heroes, and they are heroes for the great State of Texas.

Now, I would like to take a moment to recognize the Medal of Honor recipients here in the Gallery: LTC William Swenson and COL Paris Davis.

In just a moment, I will propound a unanimous consent request to take up and pass H.R. 695, the House-passed version of the Medal Act that passed