

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the House of Representatives

FROM: Representative Babette Josephs

DATE: June 7, 2011

SUBJECT: Request for Co-Sponsorship – Chinese prisoner Ai Weiwei

In the near future, I intend to introduce a resolution urging the Congress and the President of the United States to continue advocating for the immediate release of Chinese prisoner Ai Weiwei.

Ai Weiwei was born on May 18, 1957 in Beijing, China. He is a renowned artist, freedom fighter, architect, curator, photographer, and film producer and is noted for his collaboration with Swiss architects Herzog & de Meuron as the artistic consultant on the Beijing National Stadium for the 2008 Olympics. As a social and cultural activist, Ai Weiwei has been known to investigate government misconduct while speaking out against human rights and public safety issues such as the shoddy construction practices that resulted in the deaths of many school children when their schools collapsed during the 2008 Sichuan earthquake and the high number of Chinese infants and children who became sickened by contaminated milk powder.

Ai Weiwei uses his art to speak to the masses in an effort to promote dialogue on meaningful ways to effectuate positive social change in the People's Republic of China. His life would suddenly change when on April 3rd, 2011 Chinese authorities took him into custody as he attempted to board a flight at the Beijing Airport and later reportedly charged him with "economic crimes", specifically tax evasion. It is widely believed that the true reason for Ai Weiwei's detention by Chinese government officials is rooted in the fact that he has openly criticized the Chinese government for its failure to embrace democratic concepts such as liberty and freedom of speech.

There is a worldwide public outcry concerning the detention of Ai Weiwei and several of his detained colleagues who still remain "missing". Please contact Jennifer Belz in my Harrisburg office at JBelz@pahouse.net or at (717) 787-8529 to co-sponsor this important resolution. Thank you!