



**Statement of U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown,  
Cochairman of the Congressional-Executive  
Commission on China (CECC)**

**CECC Hearing on “Working Conditions and  
Worker Rights in China: Recent Developments”**

**Tuesday, July 31, 2012, Washington, DC**

I want to thank each of our esteemed witnesses for being here today. Each of you has done invaluable research on this important topic. I also want to thank the great staff of this Commission. They have worked hard to organize this hearing and are busy preparing our Annual Report. I know a lot of work goes into the report. Thank you for your service to this country and to the cause of human rights in China.

The topic of today’s hearing is of vital importance to Americans.

When Congress debated China PNTR more than ten years ago, concerns about human rights and labor conditions were met with expert opinion that conditions would improve with more unrestricted and unfettered trade.

But we know that any improvements in labor conditions have not kept pace with the extraordinary trade deficits we have mounted with China.

More and more of the goods we buy are made by Chinese workers. In 2011, our trade deficit with China reached an all-time high of \$295 billion. In the first five months of 2012 the trade deficit was \$118 billion, on pace to exceed last year’s record. The trade deficit has cost American workers millions of jobs.

Chinese workers aren’t making just our iPads, iPhones, and laptops. They’re also innovating on the shop floor. And they’re making our auto parts, food, drugs, and even our Olympic uniforms.

As you may know, we learned a few weeks ago that the accomplished athletes of Team USA would be wearing Chinese-made uniforms at the opening ceremonies. Members of both parties were outraged. I sent a letter to the U.S. Olympic Committee. And I met with them – and we secured a commitment that the team’s 2014 uniforms will be made in America.

These products should be made here. Hugo Boss’ facility in Cleveland, for example, can make high-quality and affordable clothing for our athletes.

But they aren't. It's not because American workers can't compete. They can compete with anyone. But they don't stand a chance against Chinese workers who are underpaid, overworked, and have few rights.

Chinese workers making some of our most popular products – iPads, iPhones, and cordless telephones – toil under the harshest conditions.

They make little over a dollar an hour. They stand all day. They work overtime that far exceeds what Chinese law allows. Management humiliates them, forcing them to clean toilets as punishment. They live and work in squalid and dangerous environments.

Indeed, we just learned from a labor rights group in Hong Kong that Chinese workers making Olympic merchandise worked excessive overtime, were docked a half day's wages for being a few minutes late, and had to bring their own masks to work.

Why do these injustices continue? Because Chinese workers have no bargaining power. In China, there is no freedom of association. There are no independent trade unions. Instead, workers are "represented" by a state union that, to quote a worker from one report, "Everyone knows...is controlled by the company."

Like American workers, Chinese workers are willing to fight for their rights. Strikes in China have grown to an estimated 30,000 a year. The new generation of Chinese workers is better educated, tech savvy, and more willing to stand up against injustice. These are encouraging developments.

But imagine how much more Chinese workers could gain if they had the right to freely organize.

We call on the Chinese government to abide by international law and guarantee freedom of association. We call on China to follow the rule of law, by strengthening its labor laws and enforcing the laws already on the books.

We must continue to do all we can to support our workers against China's unfair labor and trade practices. That's why I've introduced the ***Wear American Act of 2012***, the ***All-American Flag Act***, and the ***Currency Exchange and Reform Act***.

Finally, we must hold U.S. companies accountable for working conditions in their supply chains.

That's why today I sent a letter to Apple regarding factories in China.

I have urged Apple to fulfill the promises it made following an investigation by the Fair Labor Association. I have asked Apple to keep my office and the American people updated on its progress. I have urged Apple to strengthen its engagement with the Department of Labor.

Companies like Apple are in a unique position to improve working conditions in China while maintaining their bottom line. I hope they will do the right thing.

Again, I thank our witnesses for being here and look forward to your testimony.