

A Most Favored-Nation?

Until China joins the World Trade Organization, the U.S. Congress must still vote to extend that country's most-favored nation status. Those votes will occur later this summer.

Politicians claim the vote is a no-brainer ... a pro forma vote ... a vote on a little technical amendment. In fact, they will say anything to avoid the hard truth: China refuses to respect basic human rights.

Since Congress granted it "permanent" most favored nation status, China has:

- Refused to fully ratify the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights because one section of the covenant calls for the right to form independent trade unions.
- Continued to demand increased transfer of technology and jobs before agreeing to purchase many products from the United States.
- Kept labor union activists like Zhang Shanguang in prison. During the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests, Zhang tried to start an independent union and for the last decade he has been subjected to "reform through labor" in the brutal prison system that the Chinese call *laogai*.
- Cracked down on religious freedom. The Chinese government has harassed, persecuted, jailed, beaten and sometimes killed Chinese men women and children for practicing their faith.
- Become the top contributor to the U.S. trade deficit. The U.S. Department of Commerce reported that the deficit's growth reflects China's new status as the world's largest exporter to the United States, with a trade deficit of \$83.8 billion in 2000.

China's leaders desperately need their Most Favored Nation status extension. Perhaps, it is time they actually earn it by recognizing the fundamental human and economic rights of workers.

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