Written by **Raven Clabough** on March 26, 2020

U.S. House Introduces Resolution Condemning Chinese Government Over COVID-19

The U.S. House of Representatives has introduced a resolution condemning the Chinese communist government for its mishandling of the COVID-19 outbreak and its role in the current pandemic and the corresponding global economic crisis.

The resolution, introduced by Representatives Jim Banks (R-Ind.) and Seth Moulton (D-Mass.), asserts that China "made multiple, serious mistakes in the early stages of the COVID-19 outbreak that heightened the severity and spread of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which include the Chinese government's intentional spread of misinformation to downplay the risks of the virus, a refusal to cooperate with international health authorities, internal censorship of doctors and journalists and malicious disregard for the health of ethnic minorities."

The resolution cites a study by the University of Southampton, which determined that the coronavirus could have been contained if Chinese authorities had taken immediate action and were transparent in the early stages.

According to the study, if Chinese authorities would have implemented interventions even just one week earlier, cases could have been reduced by 66 percent. That number jumps to 95 percent if interventions would have been conducted three weeks earlier, the research found.

The resolution states the Chinese health authorities were alerted to the novel strain of coronavirus on December 27, 2019, though the first human was infected with it on November 27, 2019. Among the mistakes and poor decisions made by the Chinese government in attempts to contain information about the virus, the resolution cites waiting five days to shut down Wuhan's open-air market, the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market, despite having been informed by Dr. Yu Wenbin and a team of researchers at Xishuangbanna Tropical Botanical Garden that the market "greatly contributed to the spread of COVID-19" throughout Wuhan; failing to lockdown the city of Wuhan before millions left; and punishing doctors such as Ai Fen, the director of Wuhan Central Hospital's emergency department who shared a diagnostic report on the then-unknown COVID-19 with a group of doctors on WeChat, for "spreading rumors."

The Chinese government, bent on diminishing public knowledge of the virus, directed all research institutions to "cease publicly publishing any information related to a then unknown SARS-like virus,

and order them to destroy existing samples of the virus or transfer them to approved testing sites," the resolution states. Efforts to contain information pertaining to the then-unknown virus meant the *People's Daily*, China's largest newspaper, did not report on the virus until January 21, one month after it had been internally confirmed, and three days after 10,000 families attended the City of Wuhan's annual Lunar New Year Banquet, sponsored by the Wuhan city government. China also expelled American nationals working at major media publications such as the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times*, further diminishing the spread of information pertaining to the outbreak in China.

According to the resolution, the Uyghur Muslims and other ethnic minorities in China have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19 because roughly 1,000,000 of them are kept in crowded and unsanitary "re-education camps," and millions more were subjected to a strict quarantine that resulted in "mass starvation and shortages of basic medical supplies."

Additionally, Chinese authorities provided inaccurate statistics on the daily tally of confirmed cases by failing to include those who tested positive for the virus but remained asymptomatic, thereby undermining the ability of the American public-health authorities to prepare for the health risks and spread rate of the virus.

Efforts to deny culpability include Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman Zhao Lijian's claim that the virus was launched by the U.S. Army to wage biological warfare on China and claims by China's ambassador to South Africa and China's ambassador to Australia that there is no evidence COVID-19 originated in China.

The resolution formally condemns the Chinese government for its censorship of doctors and journalists during the early outbreak of the virus and its treatment of the deceased Dr. Li Wenliang, who warned his medical school classmates about a SARS-like virus over WeChat and was later forced to sign a letter confessing to making "false comments" that "severely disturbed the social order." The resolution also condemns the Chinese government for its refusal to allow the U.S. Centers for Disease Control to assist in the country's response to the virus for more than a month, which "hamper[ed] the United States' early attempts to learn more about COVID-19." China's National Health Commissions' denial that COVID-19 was transmitted from person-to-person was also condemned.

The resolution also calls for the World Health Organization Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhnom Ghebreyesus to retract his "highly misleading statements of support" for the Chinese government's response to the virus outbreak. Ghebreyesus praised China's "top leadership, and the transparency they have demonstrated."

The resolution calls on China to do the following:

> Publicly state that there's no evidence that COVID-19 originated anywhere else but China;
>
> Denounce the baseless conspiracy that the United States Army placed COVID-19 in Wuhan;
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> Revoke its expulsion of American journalists;
>
> End its detainment of Uyghur Muslims and other persecuted ethnic minorities; and
>
> End all forced labor programs

Critics are decrying the resolution, claiming it will exacerbate relations with Asian-Americans, a community they claim has been unfairly targeted by panic-stricken Americans in the wake of the coronavirus crisis.

"During a pandemic like this, people are afraid and angry, and directing that anger towards China puts AAPIs at risk, as we have already seen with the insults and assaults against them," Representative Judy Chu (D-Calif.), chairwoman of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, told NBC News.

But Banks contends the resolution has nothing to do with the Asian-American community, nor the Chinese citizens, but instead focuses on the Chinese government.

"Of course, no one should make the mistake of believing that members of the Asian American community or Chinese citizens are responsible for or associated with the Chinese government's lies. Anyone not able to make that distinction would be guilty of discrimination," Banks said.

Raven Clabough acquired her bachelor's and master's degrees in English at the University of Albany in upstate New York. She currently lives in Pennsylvania and has been a writer for The New American *since 2010.*

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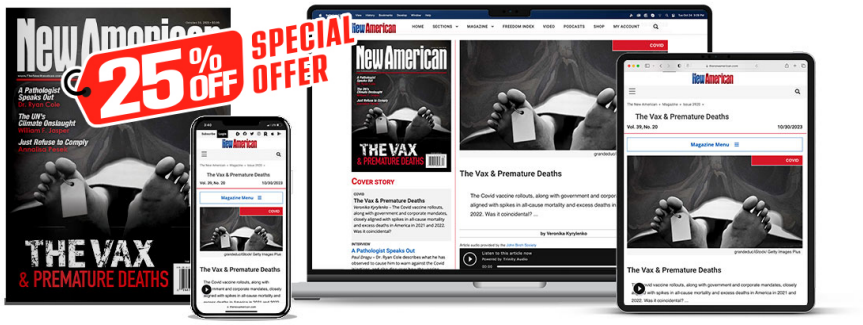

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