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NEWS

U. S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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MFN FOR CHINA

WASHINGTON - SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER BOB DOLE (R-KS) TODAY RELEASED THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT ON MOST-FAVORED NATION STATUS FOR CHINA:

ON WEDNESDAY, PRESIDENT BUSH INDICATED HIS INTENTION TO SEEK A RENEWAL OF MFN STATUS FOR CHINA. YESTERDAY, THE DISTINGUISHED MAJORITY LEADER, SENATOR MITCHELL, CRITICIZED THE PRESIDENT'S DECISION. AT THE SAME TIME, HE INTRODUCED LEGISLATION TO PROVIDE ONLY A SIX MONTH EXTENSION OF MFN, WHILE CONDITIONING ITS FURTHER EXTENSION ON VERY STRICT CRITERIA COVERING HUMAN RIGHTS, ARMS PROLIFERATION ISSUES, AND ECONOMIC MATTERS.

THIS WILL BE ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT DEBATES AND DECISIONS OF THE 102ND CONGRESS. I HOPE THAT WE WILL TREAT IT THAT WAY, AND NOT TURN IT INTO A POLITICAL FOOTBALL. THIS IS A DECISION THAT DESERVES TO BE MADE ON THE BASIS OF THE SUBSTANTIVE CONSIDERATIONS -- THE ENORMOUS IMPORTANCE OF OUR BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP WITH CHINA, AND OUR VERY REAL AND LEGITIMATE CONCERNS ABOUT MANY OF THE POLICIES OF THE BEIJING REGIME -- AND NOT ON THE BASIS OF THE PROSPECTS FOR GIVING PRESIDENT BUSH A "BLACK EYE" AS WE MOVE INTO THE 1992 POLITICAL SEASON.

LET'S BE CLEAR: NO WANT IS HAPPY WITH CHINESE POLICIES IN THE AREAS CITED BY THE MAJORITY LEADER.

NONE OF US WILL EVER FORGET THE HARSH VISUAL IMAGES OF TIENANMEN SQUARE, AND NONE OF US CAN IGNORE THE STRONG EVIDENCE THAT THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION HAS IMPROVED ONLY AT THE MARGINS. THE GULF WAR REMINDS US AGAIN OF THE CRITICAL IMPORTANCE OF WEAPONS PROLIFERATION, AND OUR CONTINUING DEEP CONCERNS ABOUT CHINA'S POLICIES AND HISTORY OF ASSURANCES GIVEN BUT NOT OBSERVED.

AND, OF COURSE, THERE ARE IMPORTANT ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, INCLUDING THAT OF PATENTS AND COPYRIGHTS.

SO THIS QUESTION WILL NOT BE DETERMINED ON THE BASIS OF WHO WILL DEFEND THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT, AND WHO WILL CRITICIZE THAT GOVERNMENT. THAT IS NOT THE ISSUE.

THE REAL ISSUES ARE: ONE, HOW DO WE NUDGE CHINA IN THE RIGHT DIRECTIONS ON THESE IMPORTANT QUESTIONS? DO WE BETTER DO THAT THROUGH A POLICY OF ECONOMIC ISOLATION AND DEPRIVATION -- OR DO WE INSTEAD OPT FOR CONTINUED ENGAGEMENT, COMBINED WITH A STRONG A CONSISTENT DIPLOMACY THAT MAKES CLEAR TO BEIJING OUR STRONG OPPOSITION TO SOME OF THEIR POLICIES?

AND, TWO, HOW DO WE BALANCE CONFLICTING INTERESTS: SOME VERY REAL AND IMPORTANT ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS, WHICH SUGGEST A CONTINUATION OF MFN -- VERSUS A GESTURE TO SHOW OUR DISAPPROVAL OF CHINESE POLICIES.

I'M NOT GOING TO TRY TO KID ANYONE. THOSE OF US WHO WILL SUPPORT THE PRESIDENT -- AND I WILL -- HAVE AN UPHILL FIGHT.

BUT I THINK WE HAVE ONE BIG ADVANTAGE. I THINK IF WE STICK TO THOSE REAL ISSUES, WE WILL HAVE THE BEST ARGUMENTS -- THE COMMON SENSE ARGUMENTS -- ON OUR SIDE. I THINK WE WILL BE ABLE TO SHOW THAT THIS IS A CASE OF "FEEL GOOD" VERSUS "DO GOOD." AND IN THAT CIRCUMSTANCE I HOPE WE WILL MUSTER THE VOTES TO DO THE GOOD THING -- THE SENSIBLE THING -- WHICH IS TO BACK THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES ON THIS CRUCIAL FOREIGN POLICY ISSUE.

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