



On Tuesday I was visited by the Deputy Consul General of the Chinese Consulate of Chicago. It is not often that the official liaisons of a foreign power visit with, or care about the actions of, a Minnesota state legislator. So, when I received the Chinese Consul General's meeting request, I confess I was surprised.

It was a pleasant visit. The Counsel General and his colleagues were gracious and interesting guests. And, I suspect that we could have exchanged many interesting facts and stories about our respective countries.

Unfortunately, my visitors did not come to discuss ice hockey or Walleyes. They wanted to speak about a bill I authored, [SF2090](#). SF2090 is a "resolution expressing concern over persistent and credible reports of systematic, state-sanctioned, forced organ harvesting from non-consenting prisoners of conscience, primarily from Falun Gong practitioners imprisoned for their spiritual beliefs, and

members of other religious and ethnic minority groups in the People's Republic of China."

I signed on to the bill after being approached by ethnic Chinese Falun Gong practitioners (here in the state of Minnesota) presenting information that formed the basis of the U.S House's [H.R. 281](#). That information purports to show that the Falun Gong are in fact subject to forced organ harvesting – and that many such organs are being sold on the international market.

While there have been credible reports of such abuses, I have not yet been presented with irrefutable proof. The reports could be wrong. But, the refusal of the Chinese government to present a verifiable accounting for the spike in available transplant organs raises suspicions.

As someone raised in America and deeply committed to the free speech, religious freedom and other provisions of our Constitution, the specter of a government oppressing its unpopular religious believers and selling their organs is almost unbelievably inhuman.

My friendly guests gave no hint of such inhumanity. Yet, the entire episode has seared into my mind the absolutely critical importance of religious freedom and free speech. When government powers undermine these freedoms and make religious communities/believers second class citizens, we risk making our societies places of incredible state-sanctioned violence. Whether Inner Mongolia or Indiana, may we never permit government that sort of power.