

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 24, 2005

Cosponsor S. 1117, the U.S.-China Cultural Engagement Act

Dear Colleague:

We are writing to urge you to cosponsor the United States-China Cultural Engagement Act, S.1117 (introduced on May 25). The goal of this legislation is to deepen the peaceful business and cultural engagement of the United States and the People's Republic of China.

The fundamental issue raised in the bill – how America can best cope with the emergence of China – involves trade, U.S. competitiveness, and national security considerations.

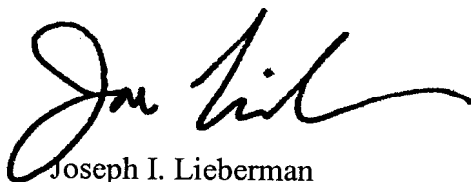
We stand at the threshold of a new era in American Foreign policy: the People's Republic of China is becoming one of the two most influential nations on Earth.

Those versed in international affairs and trade are fully aware of China's emerging influence. However, the American education system is not equipped to supply the number of skilled professionals required to constructively interact with China. According to the 2000 Census, there are about 2.2 million Americans that speak Chinese. Of that, about 90 percent are Americans of Chinese descent. According to several studies, there is a dearth of knowledge among college-bound Americans regarding prominent Chinese cultural figures such as Confucius. China, on the other hand, mandates English instruction beginning in what we would call the third grade. For every student we send to study in China, they send 25 to study here.

The proposed legislation authorizes \$1.3 billion over five years to improve our ability to engage China through student exchange, language and cultural education for Americans, and improved consular services to facilitate American business engagement in China. Some may argue this is too much given other important, under-funded, national priorities. But we believe the dividend from this investment will pay for itself a hundred times over, or even more, as it opens opportunities for economic growth and helps us to find ways to avert potential future crises.

The rise of China comes with a whole set of challenges. But the ability to talk to and understand each other should not be among them.

We urge you to join us in sponsoring this measure.



Joseph I. Lieberman
United States Senator



Lamar Alexander
United States Senator