

The Hong Kong Be Water Act of 2019

Background

- Millions of Hongkongers have taken to the streets over the past several months to peacefully protest Beijing's steady encroachment upon the democratic liberties promised to them under the Sino-British Joint Declaration and the Hong Kong Basic Law.
- The government of Hong Kong has responded to those peaceful demonstrations with tear gas, water cannons, rubber bullets, beatings, and most recently, live ammunition.¹
- The government of the People's Republic of China has issued a range of threats against the protestors, including that of paramilitary or military force, and leaned heavily on the Hong Kong government to maintain its pressure on the Hong Kong protestors.
- The government of the People's Republic of China has used economic blackmail to compel international companies into abetting its crackdown on protestors.^{2,3}
 - Google and Apple removed mobile apps that helped protestors navigate and organize.⁴
 - The National Basketball Association criticized members of its organization that expressed support for the Hong Kong movement and explicitly indicated its support for Beijing's position.^{5,6}
 - Several airlines have yielded to China's demands, including by sanctioning employees who voiced support for the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong.^{7,8}

What Senator Hawley's bill does

The bill, titled the *Hong Kong Be Water Act*, calls for sanctions under the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act to combat the Hong Kong and Chinese governments' suppression of Hongkongers' freedoms of speech, association, assembly, procession, and demonstration.

The legislation does the following:

1. Condemns the government of the People's Republic of China for violating its obligations under the Sino-British Joint Declaration of 1984 and the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China.
2. Calls for Global Magnitsky sanctions against the Hong Kong and Chinese government officials – and those operating on behalf of or in cooperation with the same – responsible for suppressing or facilitating the suppression of Hongkongers' freedoms of speech, association, assembly, procession, and demonstration.
3. Calls for freezing the assets of Chinese nationals and state-owned enterprises who have contributed to the suppression of Hongkongers' freedoms of speech, association, assembly, procession, and demonstration.

1. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/06/hong-kong-police-violence/>

2. <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/corporate-americas-subservience-to-china-and-american-populism-cannot-coexist>

3. <https://mashable.com/article/china-censorship-companies-hong-kong-protests-nba/>

4. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/apple-pulls-hong-kong-cop-tracking-map-app-after-china-uproar-11570681464>

5. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/2019/10/07/nba-under-fire-all-directions-after-response-rockets-china-incident/>

6. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/2019/10/15/lebron-james-criticizes-daryl-moreys-decision-send-controversial-hong-kong-tweet/>

7. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-hongkong-protests-cathay-pacific-insi/as-protests-rack-hong-kong-china-watchdog-has-cathay-staff-walking-on-eggshells-idUSKBN1WI0MA>

8. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/politics/article-air-canada-begins-listing-taipei-as-part-of-china/>