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ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

### COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

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WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115

Majority (202) 225-2927

Minority (202) 225-3641

January 24, 2022

Jeff Shell  
Chief Executive Officer  
NBCUniversal  
400 North Capitol Street, N.E.; Suite 850  
Washington, DC 20001

Gary Zenkel  
President of Olympics and Business  
NBCUniversal  
400 North Capitol Street, N.E.; Suite 850  
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Mr. Shell and Mr. Zenkel:

With the 2022 Winter Olympics set to commence in Beijing, China on February 4, we write to inquire how you will use your investment in the Games to shed light on China's history of human rights abuses. As members of the Committee on Energy and Commerce, we have jurisdiction over how businesses conduct U.S. commerce, how the U.S. preserves the integrity of competitive sports, and the U.S. media marketplace. Like our athletes competing abroad, we believe all companies doing business in the U.S. must be examples to the world, as their success has been benefited from our country's respect for the rule of law, human rights, and entrepreneurial enterprise.

The twentieth anniversary of China's entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO) occurred this past December. It is a reminder that with the privileges of membership in the WTO comes the responsibility to move away from the economic model of state-led subsidies and control, questionable business practices, and reprehensible treatment of labor. That was the expectation of both the U.S. and the rest of the developed world when granting China's admission, and a primary reason why the WTO recently admonished China for purposely failing

to meet this expectation.<sup>1</sup> Instead, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which controls the People's Republic of China (PRC), has further tightened its grip as opposed to opening up their country to human rights and democratic values.

As you are no doubt aware, the CCP is responsible for atrocities against Uyghur Muslims in the Xinjiang province.<sup>2</sup> In addition to these despicable actions, the CCP continues to crack down on the citizens of Hong Kong and silence those who speak out against the party.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, the authoritarian regime in Beijing continues to use its military presence to threaten Taiwan.<sup>4</sup> These well-documented facts should startle every American and garner more attention in your corporate boardroom. We are not alone in this criticism, as CNN anchor Jake Tapper recently blasted U.S. entities involved with Beijing's authoritarian regime following the disappearance of tennis star Peng Shuai, saying "There is no amount of money that can buy enough soap to wash that blood off their hands,"<sup>5</sup> and former White House spokesman Ari Fleischer stated that "China is not working for the good of the world. China is bent on having superiority over the world which could take it in all kinds of dangerous directions."<sup>6</sup>

The rapprochement that began when President Richard Nixon visited China in 1972 with the goal of opening China to the West to bring about peaceful relations and freedom to China's people through commerce was pivotal at the time. However, it has become clear that President Nixon's goal encouraging freedom and human rights through commerce in China will not work while Western companies continue to capitulate to the Chinese Communist Party.

In the United States, we have a rich history of ensuring the public has access to a multitude of diverse, and often conflicting, ideas and ideologies. Our rules and regulations for broadcast licensees have centered on promoting the battle of ideas. As the FCC observed over a half century ago, "Paramount to an informed opinion and wisdom in such choice in such a climate is the public's need to know the identity of those persons or groups who solicit the public's support."<sup>7</sup> Given China's history of censorship and government control, and the fact that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) stands to benefit financially from NBCUniversal's coverage of the games, we are concerned about the extent of influence the CCP may have over NBCUniversal's coverage of the games.

As NBCUniversal begins its coverage of the 2022 Winter Olympics, we believe viewers and listeners deserve to understand whether your programming has been influenced by the IOC or the Chinese Communist Party. Please provide written responses and any related documentation to the following questions by February 7:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.politico.com/news/2021/10/21/wto-china-20th-anniversary-trade-policy-516647>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/china/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/hong-kong-news-site-shuts-pro-beijing-lawmakers-82048790>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/new-years-speech-taiwan-president-warns-china-against-military-adventurism-2022-01-01/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10280231/CNNs-Jake-Tapper-slams-major-corporations-blinded-Chinese-cash.html>

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2021/12/22/ari\\_fleischer\\_its\\_time\\_for\\_the\\_entire\\_world\\_led\\_by\\_the\\_american\\_business\\_community\\_to\\_leave\\_china.html](https://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2021/12/22/ari_fleischer_its_time_for_the_entire_world_led_by_the_american_business_community_to_leave_china.html)

<sup>7</sup> *Amendment of Sections 3.119, 3.289, 3.654, and 3.789 of the Commission's Rules, Report and Order*, 34 FCC 829, 849, para. 59 (1963).

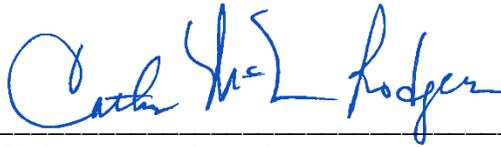
1. Please summarize your investment in the PRC.
2. It has been reported that the IOC included human rights requirements several years ago in the host city contract for the 2024 Paris Olympics, but it did not include those guidelines for the 2022 Winter Olympics held in Beijing, China.<sup>8</sup>
  - a. Has the IOC or the CCP taken any steps to influence your coverage of the games relating to reported human rights abuses against Uyghur Muslims in the Xinjiang province? If so, please explain.
3. Has the IOC or CCP asked you to make changes in how they are covered or advertised on NBCUniversal programming?
  - a. If yes, please list every instance in which the IOC or CCP requested a change, when the request was made, why the change was requested, if failure to accede to the CCP requests and suggestions would have resulted in negative consequences for your company, and if you subsequently abided by their demands and why.
4. Has the CCP suggested changes to public content displayed on NBCUniversal programming in either the United States or China?
  - a. If yes, please list every instance in which the IOC or CCP requested a change, when the request was made, why the change was requested, if failure to accede to the CCP requests and suggestions would have resulted in negative consequences for your company, and if you subsequently abided by their demands and why.
5. As part of your rights to broadcast the games, are you in any way precluded by the IOC or CCP from coverage that would be critical of the government of the PRC?
6. Does the government of the PRC or the CCP have the ability to block your broadcast feed to the United States as they deem fit?
7. Please list any connections your company has with the CCP, including the name of the official within the CCP and the capacity of their role in your organization.
8. What kind of safeguards do you have in place to ensure that there is no forced labor, specifically in Xinjiang province, used by NBCUniversal or any of your partner suppliers or support services?
9. Do you believe the CCP privately influenced or pressured the IOC in any way to hold the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing?

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<sup>8</sup> <https://apnews.com/article/entertainment-sports-china-beijing-hong-kong-a2b128fcdd3c0626fcf83e7e405db52c>

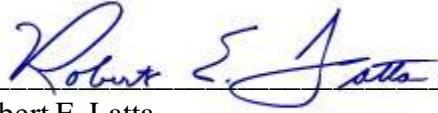
If you or your team have any questions about our request, please contact Kate O'Connor at the Committee on Energy and Commerce at (202) 225-3641. We appreciate your prompt attention to this matter prior to the 2022 Winter Olympics. Thank you.

Sincerely,



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Cathy McMorris Rodgers  
Republican Leader  
Committee on Energy and Commerce



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Robert E. Latta  
Republican Leader  
Subcommittee on Communications and  
Technology