

Annette Santos

228 Justice Court, NE #B Washington, DC 20002

April 4, 2012

Members of the Broadcasting Board of Governors
330 Independence Avenue
Washington, DC 20237

To Whom It May Concern:

I write in support of Voice of America radio and television broadcasting, particularly to China, Tibet and Russia. In addition, I write in support of the efforts of the Committee for U.S. International Broadcasting. The CUSIB works to ensure that U.S. government-funded broadcasts promote respect for human rights and freedom of the press, especially in nations where these basic freedoms are under attack.

I write to you on a personal basis to express dismay that Voice of America radio and television broadcasts to Russia ceased in 2008. I am deeply concerned that although last year's proposed cuts of VOA Mandarin and Cantonese radio and television programs were halted, this year's proposal includes the elimination of VOA Cantonese services and VOA Tibetan Radio Services, at a time when there is significant unrest in Tibet. I urge you to continue the Cantonese and Tibetan broadcasts, and to restore them to Russia.

I well remember as a girl in Nazi-occupied Hungary, how every Sunday afternoon my family would draw the shades, close the curtains, and gather around the shortwave radio, pressing our ears close so that we could catch each precious word of freedom and hope that poured out of that radio receiver like manna from heaven. We had to strain to hear over the static caused by Nazi attempts to block the signal, but we were grateful to do so, because these words of truth were pure gold in the ubiquitous mire of Nazi propaganda. The VOA and BBC broadcasts were our one connection to freedom, our one connection to hope, and our lifeline that gave the resistance the courage to endure to the end. The VOA broadcasts fanned the fires of resistance in the brave underground fighters who sought to destroy the brutal Nazi totalitarianism from within. To cut off the VOA broadcasts would have been to cut off the very legs of the resistance. The same is true today in nations ruled by totalitarian regimes.

Now, the people of China and Tibet are suffering at the hands of a brutal, heartless regime. They also cannot speak openly without fear of punishment. The Chinese Communist Party seeks to maintain complete control over the information available to the people of China and Tibet. The CCP blocks the Internet and controls the flow of information, distorting the truth and promoting distrust of America. VOA has been the voice of freedom and democracy in China for 70 years. It is highly respected, even venerated, in China. Human rights activists like Chinese Nobel Peace Prize laureate Liu Xiaobo and Chinese campaigner for women's rights Chen Guangcheng

languish in prison and under house arrest. VOA broadcasts may be the only link with the free world for their families and supporters.

Millions of Cantonese speaking and Mandarin speaking Chinese people depend on VOA daily as their lifeline to the light of truth, freedom and hope. Millions of Tibetans also depend upon VOA's Tibetan radio broadcasts. Radio reaches hundreds of millions who are too poor to afford television or the Internet, especially in rural China and Tibet.

Further, VOA radio and satellite television serve to counter anti-American propaganda in the most powerful way, giving a positive view of America, which is so necessary during this time of increasing Chinese militarism and anti-American militancy. Thus, these broadcasts are important to our national security.

I know that my late husband, Congressman Tom Lantos, would have fought to save the VOA Russian, Tibetan, and Cantonese Broadcast Services -- to use all available means to deliver uncensored news, hope and encouragement to those seeking freedom. How could I do any less?

Recent pro-democracy protests around the world and attempts to suppress them show that giving up radio and television broadcasting to rely exclusively on the Internet would be a mistake, because the Internet can so easily be monitored and blocked. I commend the CUSIB's efforts to urge the Broadcasting Board of Governors to maintain broadcasting -- especially Voice of America radio and television broadcasting -- into China and Tibet, and to restore it to Russia.

Sincerely,



Annette Lantos