

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 21, 2018

The Honorable Michael R. Pence
Vice President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Vice President Pence:

We write this letter to you with the hopes of bringing to your attention the case of Reverend Cao Sanqiang (John Cao), a United States legal permanent resident who was arrested in China on March 5, 2017. We respectfully ask that you prioritize the release of Rev. Cao from Chinese custody due to his humanitarian and missionary work that has benefited U.S.-Burma relations for the past couple decades.

We also ask that you personally meet with Mr. Cao's family to show the level of solidarity often granted to American citizens whose loved ones have been unlawfully detained.

Rev. Cao married U.S. citizen and North Carolina native Jamie Powell in 1988 and has been a permanent U.S. resident since 1990. They raised their two sons in Greensboro, North Carolina where Rev. Cao pastored churches and played an active role in the community. Additionally, Rev. John Cao played an active role in the international community, leading humanitarian projects in Burma (Myanmar) and China's western Yunnan province. Informal crossing between the Chinese and Burmese border is commonplace for humanitarian workers and missionaries, as the two governments understand the challenges in reaching certain remote villages. Indeed, Rev. Cao often traveled between the two countries in order to assist in community projects. In the three years prior to his arrest, Rev. Cao helped build and staff 16 different schools for over 2,000 impoverished ethnic minority children in the Wa State of northern Burma. He also organized and led food and clothing donation programs for the Wa and Kachin ethnic minority populations in the region.

Last year, however, the Chinese government began targeting Rev. Cao's humanitarian efforts through unwarranted questioning and forceful closure of several Wa minority schools. On March 5, 2017, Rev. Cao was arrested and detained by Yunnan Public Security in Menglian County, China for "illegal border crossing" between Burma and China. At the time, local police verbally assured his Chinese relatives he would be released within days and even accepted a petition for his bail. Unfortunately, this was not the case.

As of March 2018, Reverend John Cao was sentenced to seven years in Chinese prison for "organizing others to illegally cross the border," a charge often applied to human traffickers.

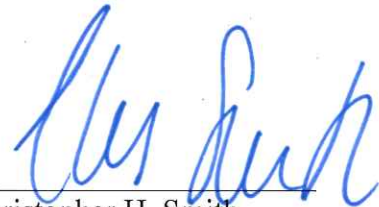
His wife and lawyer believe the unjust and harsh sentence is a result of his missionary work, his foreign/U.S. contacts, and his Chinese ethnicity. He is currently appealing the sentence. Such a cruel prison term against Rev. Cao serves only to coerce and intimidate other Americans from working in China. From our knowledge of other similar cases, Rev. John Cao will likely be forced to suffer intentionally poor prison conditions, mistreatment, or even early and mysterious death.

In light of this situation, we respectfully ask for your assistance in releasing Rev. John Cao from Chinese prison and guidance in safely returning him home to his family and church in North Carolina. Additionally, we ask that you meet with his family as a public gesture of support and solidarity.

Respectfully Yours,



Robert Pittenger
Member of Congress



Christopher H. Smith
Member of Congress



Randy Hultgren
Member of Congress



Mark Walker
Member of Congress



Ted Budd
Member of Congress



Richard Hudson
Member of Congress



Walter B. Jones
Member of Congress



Mark Meadows
Member of Congress



David Rouzer
Member of Congress