

FORTNEY PETE STARK
13TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

COMMITTEE ON
WAYS AND MEANS
JOINT COMMITTEE
ON TAXATION

WWW.HOUSE.GOV/STARK

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515

239 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-5065

39300 CIVIC CENTER DRIVE, SUITE 220
FREMONT, CA 94538
(510) 494-1388

PETEMAIL@MAIL.HOUSE.GOV

August 8, 2008

Mr. Jeff Trimble
Executive Director
Broadcasting Board of Governors
330 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20237

Dear Mr. Trimble:

I am writing to inquire about the recent action taken by the independent, taxpayer-funded Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG).

It has come to my attention that the BBG ended its contract with the satellite operator, Eutelsat, on July 31, and has announced plans to enter into an agreement with Asiasat 3S, a Chinese government-owned and controlled satellite operator with a history of censorship. Such a move potentially subjects all U.S. government and government-sponsored international broadcasting efforts in Asia to the whims and preferences of the communist Chinese government. By all appearances, this agreement is contrary to the mission of the BBG; contrary to the interests of the United States; and contrary to our historic and fundamental commitment to the right to a free press.

I have been informed that the Chinese government-controlled Asiasat 3S currently refuses to broadcast programming from the U.S.-based nonprofit, "New Tang Dynasty Television" (NTDTV) network. Until the cancellation of the Eutelsat contract on July 31, however, this programming was available in China because NTDTV utilized BBG capacity on Eutelsat. This will no longer be possible if the BBG contracts with Asiasat and cedes control over its programming in China to the Chinese government through this company.

Reports on the Asiasat contract indicate that the BBG made this decision solely on financial concerns. On behalf of the numerous constituents that have written to me with their concerns on this issue, I would like to respectfully ask exactly what premium the BBG places upon the United States' ability to make decisions on the use of taxpayer-funded satellite capacity without the interference of the Chinese government. What price did the BBG assign to free speech and a free press?

I would appreciate a timely response from the Board on this matter.

Sincerely,



Pete Stark
Member of Congress