

**Ceremony to Unveil the Chairman Portrait of House Foreign Affairs
Committee Chairman Emeritus
Ileana Ros-Lehtinen**

For over a decade, I have been fortunate to know and work with Mrs. Ros-Lehtinen. More so than the years, it is the commitment to action, resolution and substantive duty she possess that our friendship has flourished. It therefore is with great pleasure that I am able to address all of you during this momentous ceremony.

I was sentenced to life in China and I spent more than 19 years there. China has the Soviet gulag, in China they call it laogai. More than 40 million people there. Since President Clinton, President Bush until today, President Obama, they don't want to recognize this. The Soviet experts were there. They set up the Qin Cheng prison, set up the laogai system. But they prefer to have a talk about business and ignore the human rights.

She is a quintessential American; leaving a hostile Cuba at a tender age with her family and quickly understood the value and impact an adoptive country, like the U.S. can have. Her natural teaching ability led her into education, but soon realized she could influence a wider populace with policy. Experiences like these became the impetus for her service in government.

I am continually impressed at the attention she directs toward everyone she represents. She feels the same sense of urgency on issues in the town of Pinecrest, Florida as she does with settling hostile activity in Syria, because it's the people that matter to her. She has whole-heartedly supported the Laogai Research Foundation's quest in bringing progressive human rights to the People's Republic of China. Again, her initiative does not stem from her circumstances in Cuba, but are the expression of her humanity.

The Congresswoman continues to amass an impressive list of triumphs. In Chinese it's said, <<千里之行，始於足下>>, "big accomplishments come from an accumulation of little achievements made one at a time." At seven years old, her first achievement may have been realizing the damning effect a government has on citizens when individual rights are disregarded. For her unwavering service, I am honored to stand alongside Mrs. Ros-Lehtinen today and evermore.