

In 2008, after conversation with Chinese dissident and human rights activist, Harry Wu, Congressman Akin introduced legislation to address possible ethical issues with a relatively new enterprise: for profit exhibits of human remains.

Since at least 2005 (date?), cadaver exhibits have been displayed at various locations throughout the United States. These exhibits display plastinated human bodies and body parts to viewers. The plastination process uses silicone to preserve the skinless remains for dissection and / or display. While some have called the exhibits themselves “macabre,” for Congressman Akin the real ethical issues is with the origin of the bodies.

While one major exhibitor has taken care to ensure that living persons consented, in writing, to the plastination and display of their bodies, at least one other has not. Instead, many of the bodies and body parts have been obtained through the Chinese police. Human rights leaders have expressed concern that these “unclaimed” bodies could be those of Chinese political prisoners who were murdered or died in unjust conditions and then sold for profit.

In 2009, the New York Attorney General won a settlement forcing Premier Exhibitions, which obtains plastinated human remains of unverified origin from China, to display this disclosure on its website:

*This exhibit displays human remains of Chinese citizens or residents which were originally received by the Chinese Bureau of Police. The Chinese Bureau of Police may receive bodies from Chinese prisons. Premier cannot independently verify that the human remains you are viewing are not those of persons who were incarcerated in Chinese prisons.*

*This exhibit displays full body cadavers as well as human body parts, organs, fetuses and embryos that come from cadavers of Chinese citizens or residents. With respect to the human parts, organs, fetuses and embryos you are viewing, Premier relies solely on the representations of its Chinese partners and cannot independently verify that they do not belong to persons executed while incarcerated in Chinese prisons.*

In 2010, Congressman Akin introduced human rights legislation prohibiting the importation of human cadavers from China. This legislation has been well received by human rights activists and concerned citizens in Missouri and beyond.

### **MORE INFORMATION**

<LINKS TO BODIES STORIES HERE>