

It's tough not to wonder what the WTO would say about this one.

A Missouri lawmaker filed legislation last week seeking to ban the import of preserved body parts from China ahead of the opening of a controversial exhibit, which features lacquered human remains.

The bill seeks to ban importing "plastinated human remains" from China, and has been referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means. Rep. Todd Akin, a republican from Missouri's second district, is the bill's sponsor.

Akin has long called for improved human rights in China, and says he worries the unidentified bodies used in the exhibit were those of condemned prisoners.

"We should be fighting for human rights in China, not providing financial rewards for oppression," Akin wrote in a letter to the lawyers involved, according to the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

The accusations are likely to upset Chinese officials, who have made efforts in recent years to reduce the country's reliance on organ harvesting.

"Bodies ... The Exhibition," is slated to appear at an upscale St. Louis-area shopping mall beginning in October. According to a website for the exhibit, it aims to provide, "access to sights and knowledge normally reserved only for medical professionals."

This isn't the first time Akin has proposed banning the import of human cadavers from China, however. In 2008, he failed in an attempt to pass a similar bill.

A lawyer for Premier Exhibitions, the company which organizes "Bodies," [told](#) the St. Louis

Post-Dispatch that they did not obtain cadavers directly from Chinese police. Rather, the company worked with a distributor at a Chinese university, but could not verify the remains were not those of prisoners.

Akin's legislation is likely only to incense the Chinese government, which says it has worked in recent year to reduce its dependence on organ harvesting from prisoners. China was long-criticized for the practice, and [announced plans](#) last year to set up an organ donation system to help ease the practice.

– *Brian Spegele*

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Originally published in the [Wall Street Journal, ChinaRealTimeReport](#) ; June 23, 2010