

# Former CA Mayor Pleads Guilty to Acting as a Chinese Agent Under Section 951

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The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) filed a complaint last month charging Eileen Wang, who was then the mayor of Arcadia, CA, with one count of acting in the United States as an illegal agent of the People's Republic of China (PRC) without notifying the Attorney General, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 951 (Section 951). Wang pleaded guilty to the charge on May 11 and resigned as mayor that day. According to the plea agreement, from 2020-2022, Wang was directed by PRC officials to promote PRC interests, including publishing pro-PRC propaganda, in the United States. This conduct allegedly occurred before Wang was elected to Arcadia City Council in 2022 and was subsequently chosen as mayor.

During the same period, the PRC was also controlling Yaoning "Mike" Sun, who worked alongside Wang. In 2025, Sun pleaded guilty to acting as an illegal agent of a foreign government and is now serving a four-year federal prison sentence.

Wang and Sun ran the U.S. News Center, a website they used to proliferate PRC-created propaganda. PRC government officials would send Wang and Sun directives with pro-PRC content to be posted on the website. Wang would remain in communication with the officials to make any edits they requested and to report on the content's page views. U.S. News Center purported to be a news site for local Chinese Americans and did not disclose the source of the PRC-created content.

Section 951 targets activities undertaken by foreign agents in the United States, like the proliferation of propaganda. It provides criminal penalties for certain agents of foreign governments who act in the United States without first notifying the Attorney General.

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## Practice Areas

Election Law & Government Ethics  
Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA)  
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Section 951 cases, like Wang's, may involve espionage-like or clandestine behavior, information gathering, or procurement of technology on behalf of foreign governments or officials. Section 951 is centered on criminal enforcement of violations and has no formal administrative registration system.

Although similar, Section 951 is a separate and distinct statute from the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA). There are several key differences between the two statutory regimes. FARA is a disclosure statute with its primary purpose being transparency, and not criminal prosecution like Section 951. Furthermore, while the definition of foreign principal under Section 951 is limited to foreign governments and officials, FARA defines foreign principals more broadly, also including foreign companies and foreign individuals. Nonetheless, registration under FARA serves as the requisite notice under Section 951. Moreover, like Section 951, FARA does authorize criminal penalties for violations. Again, however, FARA's main purpose is transparency, and not criminal prosecution.

Wang's plea agreement for the Section 951 charge included her admission that she never notified the Attorney General of her actions in the United States as an agent of the PRC, nor did she disclose on her website that some of the content was generated by, and posted at the direction of, the PRC. Wang now faces a statutory maximum of 10 years in federal prison.

This recent action demonstrates DOJ's continued focus on enforcing foreign agent laws through use of statutory tools like Section 951 and FARA. These and other recent enforcement actions involving foreign agents reinforce the importance of ensuring maximum compliance with U.S. foreign agent laws.

*Kelly Mallon, a Summer Associate at Wiley Rein LLP, contributed to this alert.*