

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

May 20, 2008

President George W. Bush
The White House
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. President:

As the Cuban people debate their future and hope to choose a new course for their country, we urge you to follow the recommendations of prominent Cuban dissidents to foster greater contact between Americans and Cubans and a greater flow of American ideas in Cuba.

Two prominent dissidents have now called for us to end the sanctions that block family visits and remittances.

In her May 6 videoconference with you, Martha Beatriz Roque, leader of the Assembly to Promote Civil Society, asked you to ease U.S. restrictions on Cuban American travel and remittances. These restrictions are inconsistent with our humanitarian values and have no positive political impact in Cuba.

In that videoconference, Ms. Roque was reiterating a position she took in November 2006 with three other dissidents, Vladimiro Roca, Gisela Delgado, and Elizardo Sanchez.

Oscar Espinosa Chepe, a respected economist who was jailed in the 2003 crackdown, has also called for us to change American policy. Writing this week in Spain's ABC newspaper, he described changes undertaken by the Raul Castro government that are "insufficient but could be the path to deeper transformations." He said that "democratic countries that want to help the Cuban people should recognize the existence of a new situation that demands new thinking."

Policies that aim to isolate Cuba "are more harmful today than ever," Mr. Espinosa Chepe wrote. He called for easing restrictions on Cuban American travel and remittances, and he asks us to open the door to increased cultural, academic, scientific, and sports exchanges between our peoples.

Mr. President, while the changes made by the Raul Castro government in the last ninety days do not address the denial of human rights in Cuba, we view the distribution of new land to private farmers, the possibility of deeper agricultural reform, new consumer options involving communications media such as computers, DVD players, and cell phones, and the end of "tourism apartheid," as important and positive steps.

The dissidents are asking us to ease restrictions on Cuban American travel and remittances both for humanitarian reasons and to give Cuban citizens greater independence. We agree, and


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believe that policies of the type they recommend give us a greater chance of encouraging positive change in Cuba.

We join you in solidarity with those who defend human rights in Cuba and ask that you join us in heeding what these brave Cubans are asking us to do.

Sincerely,


JEFF FLAKE
Member of Congress


WILLIAM D. DELAHUNT
Member of Congress


JAMES P. McGOVERN
Member of Congress


JO ANN EMERSON
Member of Congress