

Congress of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20515

July 19, 2010

After 50 Years of Failure: “the time is right for the U.S. to open up more to Cuba”

Dear Colleague:

The Financial Times has hit the nail on the head, the time is right for the U.S. to open up more to Cuba. This is a fact that has also been recognized by groups as diverse as the **HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, THE U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, THE U.S. CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS, AND THE AMERICAN FARM BUREAU FEDERATION** which have all spoken out in support of the Travel Restriction Reform and Export Enhancement Act, H.R. 4645.

In fact, over 130 groups nationwide support this legislation for many reasons. However, all of the reasons boil down to one key point: This bill both benefits the Cuban people and people in the United States. We rarely see these groups all on the same page, but they are speaking out on this bill because they recognize that a 50-year-old policy that has yet to achieve its fundamental goal is a policy that needs to be reexamined. This bill is a moderate approach to reconsidering this policy.

H.R. 4645 would allow Americans to travel to the only country that is currently prohibited to them. It would ease trade restrictions on agricultural products going to Cuba by reinstating a payment policy that was in place as recently as 2003. Finally, it would stop foreign banks from skimming money off the top of each transaction on agricultural products from the U.S. to Cuba.

H.R. 4645 would **not** overturn the Cuban embargo. It would **not** aid the Castro regime. It would **not** allow credit to Cuba or Cuban banks. It is a moderate approach to reconsidering a failed policy in an effort to take a step toward a better solution, which is why we are proud to support it in a bipartisan way.

Sincerely,



JO ANN EMERSON
Member of Congress



ROSA DELAURO
Member of Congress

Editorial

Bomb Cuba with dollars

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Fidel is back. In a one hour television appearance this week, his first since intestinal surgery four years ago, the 83-year old head of the Cuban Communist party appeared neither hale nor hearty. But neither did he look like El Cid, the Spanish warrior who was so inspiring that even after death his body, strapped to a horse's saddle, cowed the Saracen hordes.

Mr Castro's pre-recorded show coincided with Havana's pledge to release 52 political prisoners, a decision unlinked to reciprocal US action, although it may encourage change. Legislation in Congress, for example, seeks to end the US travel ban, while leaving the broader embargo intact. Cuba, in fact, has two embargoes. The first Cubans call the "internal embargo"; the thicket of bureaucracy and socialist antipathy to individual enterprise that has ruined the economy. The second is the US embargo. Contrary to common perception, this is not a monolith. It is more like an onion, with multiple layers, although the last one, normalisation of relations, effectively requires regime change.

Some of those layers have already been peeled off. The US is now Cuba's fifth-largest trade partner, due to cash sales of food and medicine. Despite the travel ban, up to 200,000 US citizens also visit Cuba every year, illegally via Mexico or on direct Miami flights on educational or cultural exchanges. The US president has scope to expand ties further, for example by allowing business travel, as happened in Vietnam prior to ending that embargo in 1994. Travel would put more money into Cuba's economy – and most likely the regime's pockets, too. But it would also help ease ordinary Cubans' plight and remove a scapegoat Havana has used to excuse its many ills.

Cuba has long ceased being a dagger in the heart; it can hardly even be called a thorn in the side. Its ties with Venezuela may worry some. But this relationship is qualitatively different from Cuba's African or Central American campaigns of the 1970s and 1980s. It remains a repressive regime, and yet, while the judgment is fine, the time is right for the US to open up more to Cuba. Doing so is risky as it may not speed the regime's end. But any measure that reduces the possibility of Cubans streaming across the Florida Straits in the event of a chaotic transition from the Castro regime is sensible.

Barack Obama has called the current US policy "failed". Most dissidents agree; and, when their blood is not up, perhaps even most exiles, too.