



Committee on International Justice and Peace

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March 10, 2010

The Honorable Collin C. Peterson
Chairman, House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Peterson:

As chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) I write to express support for H.R. 4645, the Travel Restriction Reform and Export Enhancement Act. This bipartisan bill removes obstacles to legal sales of United States agricultural commodities to Cuba and ends restrictions on all Americans traveling to Cuba. Our Conference of Bishops supports both objectives of this legislation as ways to advance the goal of increasing engagement with the people of Cuba.

The USCCB has for many years consistently called for relaxing the sanctions against Cuba. These policies have largely failed to promote greater freedom, democracy and respect for human rights in Cuba. At the same time, our nation's counterproductive policies have unnecessarily alienated many other countries in the hemisphere. Improving the lives of the Cuban people and encouraging democracy and human rights in Cuba will best be advanced through more, rather than less, contact between the Cuban and American people. Removing the barriers to agricultural exports to Cuba, and thus deepening the trade relationship, is one step toward this goal.

While our Conference welcomed the Administration's lifting of travel restrictions for Cuban Americans, ongoing restrictions on the ability of other Americans to travel to Cuba, even when accompanying their Cuban American relatives, remain objectionable. No one should be prevented from supporting a spouse in visiting a dying relative or attending a family funeral simply because he or she is not Cuban American. We welcome H.R. 4645 because it lifts all restrictions on travel by all U.S. citizens to Cuba and removes unnecessary obstacles to trade.

Sincerely yours,

Most Reverend Howard J. Hubbard
Bishop of Albany
Chairman, Committee on International Justice and Peace