

111TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. CON. RES. 132

Expressing the sense of Congress that with respect to the totalitarian government of Cuba, the United States should pursue a policy that insists upon freedom, democracy, and human rights, including the release of all political prisoners, the legalization of political parties, free speech and a free press, and supervised elections, before increasing United States trade and tourism to Cuba.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 20, 2009

Mr. TIAHRT (for himself, Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida, Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida, Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN, Mr. SIRES, Mr. BURTON of Indiana, Mr. MACK, Mr. SHULER, and Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of Congress that with respect to the totalitarian government of Cuba, the United States should pursue a policy that insists upon freedom, democracy, and human rights, including the release of all political prisoners, the legalization of political parties, free speech and a free press, and supervised elections, before increasing United States trade and tourism to Cuba.

Whereas in the aftermath of overthrowing the government in 1959, Fidel Castro reneged on his promise to return to constitutional rule and democratic elections and instead consolidated his power through intense political repres-

sion and the imprisonment or execution of thousands of opponents;

Whereas under Raul Castro and Fidel Castro, the Cuban people continue to be oppressed and dissidents regularly brutalized;

Whereas in 1960, President Dwight Eisenhower imposed a partial embargo on Cuba by prohibiting exports, except for nonsubsidized food and medicines, in response to the regime's actions and every president since then has upheld, and even strengthened, the embargo in response to the treatment of the Cuban people;

Whereas Cuba's communist regime controls the government, the economy, health care, education, and the daily lives of the Cuban people;

Whereas according to the 2008 United States Department of State's Country Report on Human Rights, Cuba is a totalitarian state with a government that continues to deny its citizens basic human rights and continues to commit numerous serious human rights abuses;

Whereas in May 2009, the Castro regime further limited access to the Internet for Cuban citizens;

Whereas over 25,000 Cubans signed onto the Valera Project petition to open opportunities for free and responsible participation for all Cuban citizens in the political and economic life of Cuban society for which the Castro government cracked down on supporters during the "Black Spring" of 2003 and arrested 75 journalists, union members, and activists, more than 50 of whom remain in prison under inhumane conditions;

Whereas the Cuban Government routinely violates the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the

Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and the Protection of Persons Subjected to Detention or Imprisonment;

Whereas according to Human Rights Watch, “Cuba has developed a highly effective machinery of repression. The denial of basic civil and political rights is written into Cuban law. In the name of legality, armed security forces, aided by state-controlled mass organizations, silence dissent with heavy prison terms, threats of prosecution, harassment, or exile. Cuba uses these tools to restrict severely the exercise of fundamental human rights of expression, association, and assembly”;

Whereas in its 2007 annual report, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights reported that the Cuban Government’s “restrictions on political rights, freedom of expression, and dissemination of ideas have created, over a period of decades, a situation of permanent and systematic violations of the fundamental rights of Cuban citizens”;

Whereas there are estimated to be at least 205 political prisoners in 2009;

Whereas the government detains many more dissidents on a short-term basis, including 1500 in 2008;

Whereas Amnesty International reports that some released political dissenters had been imprisoned as long as 28 years;

Whereas the average wage for a Cuban worker was estimated in 2007 to be about \$20 a month;

Whereas foreign medical tourists and government officials receive health care that is not available to the Cuban people;

Whereas the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba's 2006 Report to the President asserts that "the Castro regime is failing to address even the most basic humanitarian needs of the Cuban people. Chronic malnutrition, polluted water, and untreated chronic diseases continue to affect a significant percentage of the Cuban people";

Whereas the Castro regime rations food and provides inadequate nutrition to the Cuban people;

Whereas housing and infrastructure conditions for the average Cuban remain some of the worst in the world;

Whereas communism has decimated the Cuban economy;

Whereas inflation-adjusted gross domestic product is a mere 5 percent of what it was in 1958;

Whereas in 1952, Cuba produced 7 million tons of sugar and it produced 1.5 million tons in 2008;

Whereas beginning in 1959, Castro began nationalizing United States assets in Cuba;

Whereas Article 18 of the 1976 Cuban Constitution mandates that "the state controls and directs foreign trade" and therefore there is no private Cuban market for United States goods;

Whereas the Communist party, government officials, and military forces have access to resources and luxuries denied to the Cuban people;

Whereas Forbes has conservatively estimated Fidel Castro's personal fortune to be \$900 million;

Whereas engagement with the Cuban dictatorship by the rest of the world has not eased any of the suffering brought upon innocent Cuban families by the Castro regime;

Whereas trade with the rest of the world has not eased any of the suffering brought upon innocent Cuban families by the Castro regime;

Whereas the Cuban Government does not pay all of its bills and in 2008, held over \$30 billion in debt to creditors in addition to over \$20 billion in debt still owed from the Soviet era;

Whereas increased tourism has not eased any of the suffering brought upon innocent Cuban families by the Castro regime;

Whereas the State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs warns that "any interactions with average Cubans, regardless of how well intentioned the American may be, can subject that Cuban to harassment and/or detention, and other forms of repressive actions, by state security elements.";

Whereas Cuban Government takes a 20 percent cut of all remittances sent to the nation by Cuban-Americans and another 10 percent exchange fee of checks;

Whereas any consumer goods the people on the island purchase must be purchased in the regime's "company stores" and with worthless "vouchers" called "convertible pesos" sold by the regime;

Whereas the dictator takes up to 30 percent of all hard currency "off the top" at the time island residents purchase the "vouchers", and all hard currency must be spent with purchased "vouchers" in the regime's "company stores";

Whereas since 2002, the United States has been the largest supplier of food and agricultural products to Cuba and there has not been marked improvement in the lives of the Cuban people;

Whereas lifting the United States restriction on travel would put at least \$5 billion to \$6 billion directly into the government's and military's hands every year;

Whereas the Communist government of Cuba has long stated its intention to cause harm to the United States, allied with the Soviet Union and others against the United States in Grenada and elsewhere, supported revolutionaries such as Che Guevara, and remains allied with governments such as Venezuela that wish to undermine the United States Government;

Whereas since 1982, Cuba has been designated a state sponsor of terrorism by the United States Department of State;

Whereas the Cuban military has close bilateral ties with North Korea and Iran;

Whereas Cuba is a safe haven and medical outpost for Colombia narco-trafficking guerrillas;

Whereas there are over 1.2 million people in the United States of Cuban descent;

Whereas most Cuban-Americans came to the United States as political exiles;

Whereas according to a McLaughlin and Associates poll, 72 percent of Cuban-Americans strongly support continuing the trade embargo and 69 percent support the prohibition of tourist travel to Cuba;

Whereas Cuban-Americans have contributed to United States society in a myriad of ways;

Whereas the United States supports Cuban democracy movements and from FY2001–FY2007, provided almost \$71 million in funding for such efforts;

Whereas the most successful transitions to democracy in modern history have been the result of bottom-to-top change;

Whereas the United States has a longstanding commitment to freedom and democracy in Latin America and throughout the world;

Whereas the United States has a longstanding commitment to human rights and justice;

Whereas the people of the United States do not believe in supporting brutal dictatorships;

Whereas without the release of all political prisoners, the legalization of political parties, the toleration of free speech and a free press, and supervised elections, democracy cannot exist in Cuba; and

Whereas the United States should support the Cuban people in their struggle for fundamental freedoms: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate*
2 *concurring)*, That it is the sense of Congress that with
3 respect to the totalitarian government of Cuba, the United
4 States should pursue a policy that insists upon freedom,
5 democracy and human rights, including the release of all
6 political prisoners, the legalization of political parties, free
7 speech and a free press, and supervised elections, before
8 increasing American trade and tourism to Cuba.

○