

The Alliance of Baptists
A Statement on Ending the Ban on Travel to Cuba
April 14, 2007

Consistent with our longstanding advocacy for the normalization of relations with the Republic of Cuba and the end of the 45-year-old economic embargo imposed by the United States on that neighbor island nation at the height of the Cold War, we join our collective voice to that of many others in urging Congress to end the general prohibition on U.S. citizens from traveling to Cuba.

Specifically, we endorse H.R. 654 and S.721, companion bills introduced in the 110th Congress, whose passage and enactment into law would allow complete freedom to travel to Cuba for all U.S. citizens and residents, thus bringing to an end all previous restrictions. Among the most onerous of such limitations are the following:

- The inhumane limitation on Cuban Americans from traveling to their homeland except once every three years, even when faced with family emergencies
- The severe limitation on institutions of higher education that denies travel licenses to nearly all students and limits such to students whose studies require a minimum of ten weeks in residency in Cuba
- The equally severe limitation on national and regional religious bodies that prevents them from obtaining licenses to take faith-based delegations from their denominations to Cuba.

In each of these examples, the Bush Administration has imposed said restrictions by administrative fiat over the past three years without benefit of public comment, thereby eliminating most previously existing licenses to travel to Cuba. Among those religious bodies adversely affected is the Alliance of Baptists, which maintains an active partnership in ministry with the *Fraternidad de Iglesias Bautistas de Cuba*.

Believing that restrictions on travel to Cuba amount to an encroachment on the generally recognized right of U.S. citizens to travel freely as they choose and, as applied to religious bodies, a denial of the constitutionally protected free exercise of religion, we urge the House of Representatives to pass H.R. 654 and the U.S. Senate to pass S.721. Following their reconciliation by conferees of both chambers, we respectfully request President Bush to sign such a measure into law, thus ending all restrictions on travel to the Republic of Cuba.

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