

Statement on Cuba

April 25, 2003

For more than four decades, the United States has maintained an economic embargo on the nation of Cuba. These sanctions have caused untold hardships on the Cuban people, including chronic shortages of medicines, medical supplies, and nutritious foods. We lift our collective voice in protest of the continuation of these sanctions.

Although recent internal developments in Cuba appear to have slowed the momentum for remedial legislation in the U.S. Congress, we believe that the failure to enact such laws will have as a primary consequence further injury to the people of Cuba.

We commend Rep. Jeff Flake, R-AZ, and other members of the bipartisan House Cuba Working Group, for offering legislation again this year in the First Session of the 108th Congress to lift the bans on travel, trade, and remittances. We urge other members of House of Representatives to support these measures.

We commend Sen. Max Baucus, D-MT, for his introduction of S. 403, the "United States-Cuba Trade Act of 2003," and its co-sponsors from both parties, legislation that would repeal the economic embargo in its entirety.

We register our objection to the Departments of State, Justice, and Homeland Security for the indignities imposed upon Cuban citizens invited to travel to the United States by groups such as the Alliance of Baptists. Leaders of groups such as the Fraternity of Baptist Churches of Cuba and officially designated members of its churches invited by the Alliance and its affiliated congregations should be granted travel visas without being treated as potential terrorists. We object to Cuba's listing as a "terrorist" state by our government.

We long for the day when statements such as this one no longer will be necessary, when along with our Cuban sisters and brothers we will be able to relate to and support one another without the layers of bureaucratic interference now enforced upon us.

Finally, we renew our commitment to a strong and vibrant partnership with the Fraternity of Baptist Churches of Cuba and its constituent congregations, including our promise to pray without ceasing for their shalom and that of all Cubans.

Adopted April 25, 2003

Vienna, Virginia