

## A Statement on U.S.-Cuba Relations

April 17, 2004

Consistent with our position over the past decade, we of the Alliance of Baptists renew our call for the removal of the ban on travel to Cuba imposed more than four decades ago and enforced by a succession of presidents of both political parties. We commend the Senate and House of Representatives for passing bills last year that would have removed the ban but express our outrage at the capitulation of the conference committee to a threatened veto of the legislation by President Bush.

We renew our call on Congress to pass similar legislation this year and pledge our renewed efforts to ensure that such proposals are passed with sufficient majorities to withstand a presidential veto. To that end, we pledge to continue working toward that objective.

We register our strong objection to the assignment of some 17 percent of the workers of the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control to the enforcement of the travel ban, as acknowledged recently by OFAC Director Richard Newcomb to a Senate committee. We further object to OFAC's pursuit and prosecution of those who choose to travel to Cuba without licenses rather than pursuing its congressionally mandated mission of tracking and freezing the assets of terrorists.

We further object to OFAC's decision last fall to cease granting licenses to educational institutions for "people-to-people" travel to Cuba.

Finally, we renew our commitment to working in coalition with others for the eventual normalization of relations between the United States and Cuba.