

**NEWS
FROM:**

**U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS
SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER**

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CUBAN LIBERTY BILL

HELMS-DOLE-BURTON BILL PASSES SENATE WITH OVERWHELMING BIPARTISAN SUPPORT; CUTOFF CASTRO'S FOREIGN ECONOMIC LIFELINE & SPEED DEMOCRATIC CHANGE

The Senate is taking a historic step today. We will soon vote on the conference report on the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act of 1996. It is a tragedy that it took the brutal attack on unarmed American citizens in international airspace to overcome resistance to tightening the economic noose around Castro. Many of us believed legislation should have been enacted much sooner. Fifty-nine senators voted for cloture on this bill last October. Though we were forced to delete a critical section to overcome the filibuster last year, that section has been restored in the conference report pending in the Senate.

Castro still has a few supporters in the United States. The tired rhetoric defending his dictatorship is the last stand of the Old Left. But their voices are irrelevant. Their voices are drowned out by the overwhelming and uncontestable evidence of Castro's true nature. Castro is clearly determined to cling to power at all costs, but his days are numbered. Enactment of the Libertad bill will weaken, and eventually end, Castro's desperate dictatorship.

Key Provisions of LIBERTAD Bill

There has been much said in the debate this morning about this bill. The key provisions deserve special mention. First, the Helms-Dole-Burton LIBERTAD bill codifies all regulations implementing the embargo on Cuba. This will ensure no more mixed signals will be sent from the United States -- the Cuban embargo stays in place until a transition government is in place.

Second, the LIBERTAD bill requires entry to the U.S. be denied to all individuals who traffic in stolen property in Cuba. Entry into the United States is a privilege, not a right. Enactment of this bill will guarantee that the privilege of entry to the United States is not extended to those who profit from property stolen from American citizens.

Third, effective August 1, 1996, the Helms-Dole-Burton bill creates legal recourse in American courts against firms and individuals who profit from property confiscated from Americans. Limited authority to suspend this provision is included in the conference report, but only for six month periods, only with advance notice to Congress, and only if the president certifies that such a suspension will expedite democratic change in Cuba.

There are many other important provisions in the bill: authorization to support democratic and human rights groups in Cuba, tough conditions on aid to the former Soviet states if they provide aid to Cuba, mandatory reductions in U.S. assistance and credits to any country which support completion of the nuclear reactors in Cuba, and tough requirements for U.S. government action on American fugitives in Cuba.

The LIBERTAD bill is a comprehensive package which will cutoff Castro's foreign economic lifeline. The Libertad conference report will speed up democratic change in Cuba. It sends a clear message: the time of Fidel Castro has come and gone. It has been a long, hard road to get to the point of final Senate action. I wish we could have been here much sooner. I wish we could have acted without facing veto threats and filibusters.

White House Now on Board - More Unilateral Steps Needed

But today, these differences are behind us. President Clinton has endorsed the Helms-Burton bill -- in its toughened form. President Clinton has asked all members of Congress to support this legislation. In a letter to me this morning, he wrote, "The conference report is a strong, bipartisan response

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that tightens the economic embargo against the Cuban regime and permits us to continue to promote democratic change in Cuba. I urge Congress to pass the LIBERTAD bill in order to send Cuba a powerful message that the United States will not tolerate further loss of American life."

There can be no doubt that the signal from the U.S. is stronger when the Democratic White House and Republican Congress speak with the same voice. There can be no doubt that the signal from the U.S. is unmistakable: democracy yes, dictatorship no.

Now that the White House is on board with a tougher approach to the Castro regime, I hope they will enact unilateral steps to increase pressure on Castro -- steps they could take today. The Clinton administration should beef up enforcement of the embargo, including opening a Treasury Department office in Miami. The Clinton administration should also instruct the F.B.I. to crack down on Cuban agents in the U.S., including tougher restrictions on so-called "diplomats" and stronger steps to counter Cuban spies in Miami. The administration should also require strict compliance with the foreign agents registration act to ensure all of Castro's lobbyists are publicly disclosed. Measures like these will help demonstrate a genuine change of heart by the White House.

Foster Democratic Change & End Castro's Reign of Terror

Let there be no mistake: Castro's dictatorship will end. From Poland and Prague, from Moscow to Managua, from Kiev to Kazakhstan, Communist tyrants have fallen to the will of people. Castro stands alone as the last dictator in the hemisphere. When the history of the fall of Castro is written, today's action will have a central place. The atrocity over the Florida Straits -- the Murder of the Martyrs of February 24th -- has galvanized opposition to Castro. And it has overcome obstacles to passing the Libertad bill before us today.

There is a long list of people who worked hard on the legislation before us. Senator Helms made enactment of this legislation a priority when he assumed the chairmanship of the Foreign Relations Committee. Senator Mack of Florida was critical in mobilizing Senate support for the bill.

In the House, Congressman Burton played a critical role in sheparding the legislation to the overwhelming vote last September. Congressman Diaz-Balart and Congresswoman Ros-Lehtinen were tireless in their work for the bill -- in the House and in the Senate. Congressman Menendez of New Jersey was central in getting the Clinton administration to see the light on the legislation last week. All of these members deserve credit for the LIBERTAD conference report. Without their efforts, we would not be where we are today. Enactment of this legislation will end the debate over how to foster democratic change in Cuba. Enactment of this legislation will send a signal to our allies and our adversaries that the U.S. is united in opposing Fidel Castro. And enactment of this legislation will bring the end of Fidel Castro's reign of terror much closer. I urge my colleagues to support the LIBERTAD bill to send the strongest possible message to the hemisphere's last dictator.

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* Remarks delivered on Senate floor, approximately 2:15 p.m.