

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



(R - Kansas)

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE HEARING: CARIBBEAN BASIN INITIATIVE
STATEMENT OF SENATOR BOB DOLE

WASHINGTON --

BEFORE WE BEGIN, I WISH TO RECOGNIZE SEVERAL DISTINGUISHED
AMBASSADORS FROM CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES WHO ARE VISITING US TODAY
THEY ARE:

- EDMUND HAWKINS LAKE, AMBASSADOR OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA
- CHARLES A.T. SKEETE, AMBASSADOR OF BARBADOS
- JORGE L. ZELAYA, AMBASSADOR OF GUATEMALA
- DR. CEDRIC HILBUR GRANT, AMBASSADOR OF GUYANA
- FRITZ CINEAS, AMBASSADOR OF HAITI
- JUAN AGURCIA EWING, AMBASSADOR OF HONDURAS
- KEITH JOHNSON, AMBASSADOR OF JAMAICA
- AQUILINO E. BOYD, AMBASSADOR OF PANAMA
- JAMES O'NEIL LEWIS, AMBASSADOR OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
- CARLOS DESPRADEL, AMBASSADOR OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

I WOULD LIKE ALSO TO INTRODUCE FOR THE RECORD A LETTER FROM
THE AMBASSADORS IN WHICH THEY ELOQUENTLY AND PERSUASIVELY MAKE
THE CASE FOR SUPPORTING THE CBI. IN ESSENCE, THEY TELL US A
LITTLE INCENTIVE WILL GO A LONG, LONG WAY.

OUR DISTINGUISHED WITNESSES HERE TODAY WILL TELL US WHETHER
THIS IS SO, AS THE COMMITTEE'S RENEWS ITS CONSIDERATION OF THE
PRESIDENT'S CARIBBEAN BASIN INITIATIVE. LAST YEAR THE CBI PASSED
THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AND THIS COMMITTEE, BUT WE WERE
UNABLE TO COMPLETE ACTION ON THE PROGRAM. I INTRODUCED S. 544 ON
BEHALF OF THE PRESIDENT THIS YEAR, WITH SEVERAL OF MY COLLEAGUES,
BECAUSE I CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT THE CBI REPRESENTS AN
IMPORTANT PROGRAM, BUT ONLY FOR ITS BENEFICIARY COUNTRIES, BUT
ALSO FOR ADVANCING IMPORTANT U.S. INTERESTS.

THE UNITED STATES INDEED HAS A PROFOUND STAKE IN THE CARIBBEAN BASIN. THE AREA FORMS OUR SOUTHERN BORDER, AND STRADDLES SEA LANES THROUGH WHICH A SUBSTANTIAL PORTION OF U.S. TRADE MUST TRANSIT. THE RECENT LEFTIST TAKEOVERS IN NICARAGUA AND GRENADA, FOLLOWING THE CUBAN EXAMPLE, UNDENIABLY POSE A THREAT TO OUR NATIONAL SECURITY IF REPEATED THROUGHOUT THE REGION. IT IS THE PRESIDENT'S HOPE, AS IT IS MINE, THAT ECONOMIC GROWTH FOSTERED BY THE CBI WILL CONTRIBUTE TO POLITICAL STABILITY IN THESE DEMOCRATICALLY FRAGILE NATIONS.

SECURITY INTERESTS ASIDE, IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT THE CBI IS FIRST AND FOREMOST A DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR A REGION OFFERING MAJOR POTENTIAL MARKETS FOR U.S. PRODUCTS AND WITH WHICH WE HAVE STRONG SOCIAL TIES. THE UNITED STATES IS THE CHIEF SUPPLIER OF AGRICULTURAL AND MANUFACTURED PRODUCTS TO THE BENEFICIARY COUNTRIES. WE EXPORT SIGNIFICANT AMOUNTS OF TEXTILES, APPAREL, ELECTRICAL PRODUCTS, AUTOMOBILES, MACHINES, AND AGRICULTURAL COMMODITIES TO THEM. THE REGION IS AN IMPORTANT SOURCE OF STRATEGIC MATERIALS FOR US, AND THE UNITED STATES OFFERS THE BEST CHANCE FOR THESE SMALL COUNTRIES TO DEVELOP OTHER EXPORTS. ONLY THROUGH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CAN THESE STRUGGLING, FRIENDLY GOVERNMENTS OFFER SOME HOPE OF EMPLOYMENT FOR THEIR MASSIVE NUMBERS OF UNEMPLOYED CITIZENS. OVER 200,000 IMMIGRANTS COME TO THE UNITED STATES EACH YEAR FROM THE CARRIBEAN BASIN SEEKING POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC EMANCIPATION. WE MUST OFFER THEM SOME WAY TO RETAIN HOPE OF REMAINING AT HOME AND PROVIDING FOR THEMSELVES AND THEIR FAMILIES.

THE CARRIBEAN BASIN INITIATIVE APPEARS UNLIKELY TO HAVE ANY SIGNIFICANT ADVERSE EFFECT ON U.S. INDUSTRIES. ON THE CONTRARY, GIVEN THE U.S. POSITION AS THE LARGEST SUPPLIER TO THESE COUNTRIES, THE CBI STANDS TO CREATE JOBS FOR AMERICANS THROUGH THE GREATER EXPORTS WE CAN EXPECT AS THESE COUNTRIES DEVELOP. THE BILL EXCLUDES FROM ITS DUTY-FREE PROVISIONS THOSE IMPORT-SENSITIVE INDUSTRIES THAT WERE CONCERNED LAST YEAR ABOUT POSSIBLE INJURIOUS COMPETITION FROM THE BENEFICIARY NATIONS. WITH THIS PROTECTION FOR OUR WORKERS, AND THE OPPORTUNITIES THAT WILL OPEN FOR OUR FIRMS BECAUSE OF THE BILL, IT SEEMS TO ME THAT THE SOLE REMAINING ISSUE IS WHETHER WE IN THE CONGRESS CAN RISE TO THE CHALLENGE BEFORE US. I BELIEVE THAT WE CAN.