

Bob Dole



NEWS

U. S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

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CUBA LIBERTY BILL

EMBARGO ON CUBA WILL BE STRENGTHENED, DESPITE WHITE HOUSE INFLEXIBILITY; SENATE PAVES WAY FOR PASSAGE OF "LIBERTAD"

I understand why the Chairman made the decision to delete Title III from the "Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act." A determined minority -- at the urging of the White House -- was able to prevent action on the legislation. 94% of Republicans voted to invoke cloture. 17% of Democrats voted for cloture. I commend the members on both sides of the aisle willing to bring debate on this measure to a close. I know for the Democrats it is not easy to stand up to the kind of White House blitz that has occurred.

Once again, the White House says one thing and does another. The White House talks about toughening the embargo on Cuba, and then works to undermine the sanctions Castro fears most. The White House says it wants bipartisanship in foreign policy, and then uses partisan arguments to derail this legislation. Policy toward Castro's Cuba has been a perfect example of three decades of bipartisan cooperation. In the House, 67 Democrats supported a tougher version of this legislation. Nine Senate Democrats support cloture, and I expect many more would without the kind of pressure coming from 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. Let there be no mistake -- White House inflexibility has forced the change made today.

As I said last week, the Dole-Helms amendment has ten changes to address administration concerns. We were willing to make more to address issues raised in this debate -- raising the threshold for legal action from \$50,000 to \$100,000 for example, or extending the effective date from 6 months to 2 years after enactment. These are changes that will presumably be considered in conference on H.R. 927.

I supported Title III as drafted in the Dole-Helms substitute. Yes, it does give a new right of legal action that could bring more suits before American courts. But if clogging up the court system is a concern of the White House or of opponents of this bill, I call on them to join with me to enact comprehensive tort reform. Opponents of this bill say Title III would create a right for Cuban-Americans not enjoyed by Polish-Americans. They are right. And there is one critical distinction -- today, Poland is free while Cuba suffers under the boot of Castro's repression.

That's what it really comes down to -- the Cuban people continue to suffer while Castro searches for ways to finance his dictatorship. There are legitimate differences over the best way to bring democratic change to Cuba but we should be very clear about one thing: it is the chilling effect on investment in Cuba caused by the provisions of Title III that worries Fidel Castro the most.

I expect the Senate to conclude action relatively quickly on this legislation. The international embargo on Cuba will be strengthened, and important provisions for the eventual transition to democracy will be enacted. I remain hopeful that we can continue to work out a solution to the issue of property stolen by Fidel Castro that is acceptable to 60 senators.

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* Remarks delivered on Senate floor approximately 2:10 p.m.