



Committee on International Justice and Peace

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March 31, 2009

Senator Byron Dorgan
U.S. Senate

Senator Mike Enzi
U.S. Senate

Senator Christopher Dodd
U.S. Senate

Senator Richard Lugar
U.S. Senate

Dear Senators Dorgan, Enzi, Dodd and Lugar:

I write as chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) to express support for your initiative, supported by several colleagues from both sides of the aisle, in sponsoring S. 428, a bill to allow travel between the United States and Cuba.

USCCB has for many years consistently called for relaxing the sanctions against Cuba. These policies have largely failed to promote greater freedom, democracy and respect for human rights in Cuba. At the same time, our nation's counterproductive policies have unnecessarily alienated many other countries in the hemisphere. Improving the lives of the Cuban people and encouraging democracy and human rights in Cuba will best be advanced through more, rather than less, contact between the Cuban and American people.

Existing restrictions on the ability of Cubans residing in this country to travel to Cuba are particularly objectionable. No one should be prevented from visiting a dying relative or attending a loved one's funeral simply because he or she has traveled to Cuba once in the previous three years. Like you, we support changes to this inhumane policy from the new Administration of President Obama who made commitments during the campaign to adjust administrative rules to facilitate travel to Cuba. Such changes, however welcome, cannot replace the need for the Congressional action contained in S. 428 that would lift all restrictions on travel by U.S. citizens to Cuba.

Our Conference of Bishops is pleased to note that other members of Congress have joined you in co-sponsoring this legislation and will encourage other members to co-sponsor and support final passage of this important piece of legislation.

With thanks and best wishes, I remain

Sincerely yours,

Most Reverend Howard J. Hubbard
Bishop of Albany
Chairman, Committee on International
Justice and Peace