



Committee on International Justice and Peace

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February 20, 2014

Senator Patrick J. Leahy
437 Russell Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Jeff Flake
B85 Russell Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators:

As Chair of the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), I write to you both to express my appreciation for your recent op-ed piece on the continuing negative effects of the U.S. trade and travel embargo directed against Cuba. You may already be aware that the USCCB, along with the Cuban Conference of Catholic Bishops as well as the Holy See, has been outspoken for many years regarding U.S. policy towards Cuba. We are in agreement that the way to encourage and support religious freedom and human rights in Cuba is through dialogue and reconciliation between the United States and Cuba, and within Cuban society. To accomplish this, the trade embargo must be lifted.

In the wake of meetings with both U.S. and Cuban diplomatic representatives, I wrote last year to Dr. Susan E. Rice, National Security Advisor, "It is long past due that the United States establishes full diplomatic relations with Cuba, withdraws all restrictions on travel to Cuba, rescinds terrorist designations aimed at Cuba, encourages trade that will benefit both nations, and facilitates cooperation in the areas of environmental protection, drug interdiction and scientific exchanges. More engagement will help the people of Cuba achieve greater freedom, human rights and religious liberty." I enclose a copy of this letter for your consideration.

Please accept my warm personal gratitude for your leadership on U.S.-Cuban relations. I look forward to continuing to discuss your thoughts and recommendations in the years to come, and to having our staff work with you as well concerning this shared goal.

Sincerely yours,

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The Most Reverend Richard E. Pates
Bishop of Des Moines

Chair, Committee on International Justice and Peace

Enclosure