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COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
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TERRORISM AND UNCONVENTIONAL THREATS
SUBCOMMITTEE

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December 16, 2008

President-Elect Barack Obama
Transition Office
451 6th St NW
Washington, DC 20270

Re: Urge Executive Order Action to Alter Current Cuba Family Travel and Remittances
Limitations

Dear Mr. President-Elect:

Your historic election provides an opportunity to make important changes both here at home and abroad. I respectfully urge you to breathe fresh air into our relationships with our neighbors in Latin America and the Caribbean and to modernize policies relating to Cuba. I encourage you to lift the restrictions that limit family travel to Cuba and limit the amount of remittance that families may send to relatives in Cuba through an executive order soon after your inauguration in 2009.

Currently, a federal executive order limits travel to Cuba to once every three years and limits monetary remittances to family members in Cuba to \$300 annually. The current restrictions on family travel and remittances to Cuba bring hardship to the people of Cuba and their family members here in America, many of whom live in my home state of Florida and are my neighbors here in Tampa Bay. The restrictions have proven ineffective in altering the political situation and interfere with fundamental family relations and human rights. By lifting the burdensome restrictions we can provide relief to families while maintaining the pressure for human rights and change the island needs.

My office deals with the personal family struggles that these limitations bring on a regular basis. Sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, and grandsons and granddaughters are unable to visit sick or dying relatives in Cuba. In their quest to travel to Cuba to say goodbye or comfort a loved one, they are subjected to the worst kind of bureaucratic red tape because of the restrictions.

We saw the devastating effects of the restrictions this summer when Hurricane Gustav wreaked havoc on Cuba. Cuban Americans were unable to provide direct humanitarian assistance to their family members in their time of need. I was proud to

join with you at that time in calling for an emergency suspension of restrictions. You understand the personal toll this takes on families.

Clearly, the Castro regime and its half-century of oppression demand circumspection. The regime has visited torture, human rights abuses and terrorism on its own citizens. We must develop a rational and detailed plan to modernize the relationship going forward. The irrational inequity between the treatment of Cuban citizens and Haitian citizens under the law also must be revisited.

As Americans, we cannot allow our policies to bring more hardship to those we intend to help. As Floridians, we cannot expect the Cuban people, many of whom are family to us, to endure more pain. Therefore, I urge you to lift current restrictions on family travel to Cuba and remittances. Doing so will not only provide relief to thousands of people, but will show our commitment to the Cuban people and their families here in America. Then, I encourage you to review and develop a renewed, modern plan for Latin America and Caribbean basin.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment. I look forward to working with you as we renew America's security and standing abroad, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean. Please feel free to contact me if I can be of assistance in the matter at 813-871-2817 or 202-225-3376.

Sincerely,



Kathy Castor
U.S. Representative
Florida – District 11