



Committee On Finance

Max Baucus, Ranking Member

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**Statement of U.S. Senator Max Baucus:
Reaction to President Bush's Announcement on Policy toward Cuba**

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) U.S. Senator Max Baucus, Ranking Member of the Senate Finance Committee, released the following statement today, in reaction to the announcement by President Bush on Cuba:

"I continue to be disappointed by the Administration's commitment to the futile and failed embargo against Cuba. For more than four decades, the U.S. has pursued an absurd policy of embargo that has accomplished nothing but to increase the misery of the Cuban people and further isolate them from the American people. The only beneficiary of the embargo is Castro himself, who is sheltered by the wall we have built around the island.

The restrictions against travel by Americans to Cuba serve only to limit our own freedoms and protect the Castro regime from the democratizing influence of the American people. The message of freedom to the Cuban people is best delivered by Americans. Yet, by increasing restrictions on Americans traveling to Cuba, this Administration continues to restrict our ability to deliver that message.

I would hope that, at some point, we could move beyond a policy toward Cuba that is held hostage by the politics of the Electoral College. Today's announcement indicates that the Administration isn't ready to put the needs of the Cuban people before politics."

Earlier this year, Baucus introduced legislation that would seek to lift the trade embargo against Cuba, and remove travel restrictions between the U.S. and Cuba. In addition, Baucus helped establish the "Senate Working Group on Cuba," a bipartisan group of 16 Senators who share the goal of easing Cuba sanctions.

Baucus traveled to Cuba last month and pressed human rights issues in meetings with Cuban President Castro and Ricardo Alarcon, President of the Cuban National Assembly. While there, he also met with prominent dissidents, including Oswaldo Paya, leader of the Varela Project.

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