FOREIGN OPERATIONS APPROPRIATIONS/Ending Cuba Travel Restrictions

SUBJECT: **Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Bill for FY 2000. . . S. 1234. McConnell motion to table the Dodd amendment No. 1157.**

ACTION: MOTION TO TABLE AGREED TO, 55-43

SYNOPSIS: As reported, S. 1234, the Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Bill for fiscal year 2000, will provide a total of $12.74 billion in new budget authority for foreign aid programs, which is $18.98 billion less than appropriated for FY 1999 (the large difference is due primarily to a one-time appropriation of $17.86 billion that was made for International Monetary Programs last year) and is $1.87 billion below the Administration's request of $14.62 billion.

The Dodd amendment would terminate prohibitions and restrictions on travel to Cuba, including any transactions incident to such travel. Travel restrictions could be imposed only if the United States and Cuba were at war or otherwise engaged in armed hostilities.

During debate, Senator McConnell moved to table the Dodd amendment. A motion to table is not debatable; however, some debate preceded the making of the motion. Generally, those favoring the motion to table opposed the amendment; those opposing the motion to table favored the amendment.

NOTE: A pending second-degree Leahy amendment automatically fell when the Dodd amendment was tabled. The Leahy amendment substituted language for the Dodd amendment that had the same substantive effect.

Those favoring the amendment contended:

We believe that the time has come to lift the archaic, counterproductive, and ill-conceived ban on Americans traveling to Cuba. This ban is supposed to weaken Castro's grip on power in Cuba, but it actually helps him by isolating Cubans from Americans. The

(See other side)

YEAS (55)			NAYS (43)			NOT VOTING (2)	
Republicans (43 or 81%)		Democrats (12 or 27%)	Republicans (10 or 19%)	Democrats (33 or 73%)		Republicans (2)	Democrats (0)
Abraham	Helms	Bayh	Bond	Akaka	Kerrey	Mack-[2]	
Allard	Hutchinson	Breaux	Chafee	Baucus	Kerry	Voinovich-[2]	
Ashcroft	Hutchison	Bryan	Enzi	Biden	Landrieu		
Bennett	Inhofe	Byrd	Grams	Bingaman	Lautenberg		
Brownback	Kyl	Edwards	Hagel	Boxer	Leahy		
Bunning	Lott	Graham	Jeffords	Cleland	Levin		
Burns	McCain	Hollings	Lugar	Conrad	Lincoln		
Campbell	McConnell	Kohl	Roberts	Daschle	Mikulski		
Cochran	Murkowski	Lieberman	Specter	Dodd	Moynihan		
Collins	Nickles	Reid	Warner	Dorgan	Murray		
Coverdell	Roth	Robb		Durbin	Reed		
Craig	Santorum	Torricelli		Feingold	Rockefeller		
Crapo	Sessions			Feinstein	Sarbanes		
DeWine	Shelby			Harkin	Schumer		
Domenici	Smith, Bob			Inouye	Wellstone		
Fitzgerald	Smith, Gordon			Johnson	Wyden		
Frist	Snowe			Kennedy			
Gorton	Stevens						
Gramm	Thomas						
Grassley	Thompson						
Gregg	Thurmond						
Hatch							

EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:
1—Official Business
2—Necessarily Absent
3—Illness
4—Other

SYMBOLS:
AY—Announced Yea
AN—Announced Nay
PY—Paired Yea
PN—Paired Nay

United States has blocked travel to Cuba for nearly 40 years, yet Cuba is no more free today than it was when the restrictions were first imposed. In contrast, other countries that the United States has not blocked travel to have gone from being ruled by dictators to being ruled by democratically elected governments. When Americans are allowed to travel to lands that are ruled by oppressive governments, they become ambassadors of freedom. When the citizens of those lands meet Americans and learn about the wide freedoms and prosperity that exist in this country, they begin to agitate for, and expect, change. The United States appropriately lets citizens travel to Vietnam, to North Korea, and to China, all of which are undemocratic, communist nations and all of which are guilty of human rights violations, because the more American citizens have contact with the citizens of those nations the more likely it will be that those nations will become free. We believe that the same policy should be applied to Cuba, so we have offered the Dodd amendment to lift the restrictions. We urge our colleagues to support this amendment.

Those opposing the amendment contended:

We strongly support the current travel restrictions. Lifting them would not in any way increase Cuban citizens' exposure to American values, as our colleagues contend. Instead, all it would do is open up a new, huge, incredibly lucrative tourist market for Castro to prop up his tottering regime. Under current law there are a number of approved purposes for travel to Cuba, and thousands of Americans travel under those purposes each year. Further, Cuba is only 90 miles off the shore of the United States, and all Cuban citizens, as a consequence, have ready access to American media outlets. The argument that average Cubans are in any way unaware of the freedom and prosperity in the United States is patently false. Further, if we were to lift the travel restrictions entirely, almost all of the new travel would just be of the type that Cuba is getting from Canada and Europe--tourist travel. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Castro lost billions of dollars in annual foreign aid. In order to prop up his regime, he began a tourist trade that is distinguished by prostitution activities that rival Thailand's. The tourists do not wander about Cuba, meeting ordinary Cubans--they are put in hotels in enclaves that are literally walled-off from the rest of Cuba, and every employee of those hotels must be hired through the Cuban government. The only effect of lifting the restrictions would be to let American tourists go and spend hundreds of millions or billions of dollars in the sordid little tropical enclaves set up by Castro to pimp for foreign cash for his regime. Approving the Dodd amendment would make America complicit in Castro's repression.

As our colleagues have stated, Europe and Canada have never imposed the type of travel restrictions that the United States has. Until recently, they did not have a huge amount of travel to Cuba either. By our colleagues' logic, the large increase in travel from people from these free countries should have led to democratic reforms in Cuba (as should have several actions that have been taken by the Clinton Administration, including actions to increase humanitarian contacts and to increase the number of direct flights to Cuba). However, exactly the opposite has been happening. As Castro has collected the cash from European and Canadian tourists he has increased his repression. Within the past 2 years, Cuba has passed laws making it a crime punishable by 20 years in prison to support democracy and a crime punishable by 30 years in prison to help the United States distribute humanitarian relief in Cuba or to engage in similar activities. It has also conducted secret trials of dissidents for the crime of criticizing the government, and, after finding those dissidents guilty in its secret trials, it has sentenced them to lengthy prison terms. According to Amnesty International, in 1998 there were 350 political prisoners in Cuba. Finally, Castro recently sent 14 spies to America who were caught attempting to infiltrate United States military bases to commit acts of terrorism. Do any of these actions by Castro's communist dictatorship sound like pro-democracy reforms?

The United States, for many years, has been nearly alone in its criticisms of the well-documented abuses of the Castro police state. As a result of the greatly increased repression that has occurred just in the past 2 years, most of the rest of the world is now joining in the criticism. This year the United Nations Commission on Human Rights condemned Cuba for its human rights abuses. The rest of the world is finally abandoning the radical chic delusion of Castro's benevolence. It is ready to isolate him and his police state. It would be a terrible mistake to give up the fight right when the rest of the world is finally signaling that it is willing to help.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Castro has had to cut his military forces in half and his secret police force by one-third. We should keep starving his regime instead of pumping it full of tourist cash. Whether or not there are travel restrictions on other countries like China does not make much difference economically to those countries, but in the case of Cuba it makes a huge difference because of its proximity to the United States and the amount of tourist dollars that may be gained as a consequence of that proximity. We are not about to help Castro prop up his regime. We strongly urge our colleagues to oppose this amendment.