



## Department of Social Development and World Peace

3211 FOURTH STREET NE • WASHINGTON DC 20017-1194  
Phone 202-541-3199; FAX 202-541-3339; Website: [www.usccb.org/sdwp](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp)

July 22, 2004

Dear Representative,

On behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, I wish to commend you for your support of the Flake amendment to H.R. 4754, the FY 2005 Commerce, Justice, State appropriations bill, which the House of Representative adopted on July 7, 2004. The amendment would ban the Commerce Department's enforcement of the Administration's more stringent limitations on the amount of baggage licensed travelers to Cuba may carry and on the types of items that can be sent in gift parcels to Cuba.

As you know, the Holy Father, the Cuban bishops and this Conference have over the years called for an end to the embargo against Cuba and for the relaxation of travel restrictions. While we certainly hold no brief for the oppressive Cuban regime, we insist that the embargo hurts only the ordinary people of Cuba. The additional restrictions on family visits and gifts will serve only to exacerbate the situation within the country. We believe that the goals of improving the lot of the Cuban people and encouraging the democratization of the governance of Cuba are best accomplished through more rather than less contact between the Cuban and American peoples.

The Flake amendment addresses a small part of the larger structure of travel limitations, sanctions and the embargo imposed by the U.S. government against Cuba. We encourage you to revisit the more significant Treasury Department's Cuba travel regulations later this year with a view toward softening their unnecessarily restrictive aspects.

Sincerely yours,

Most Reverend John H. Ricard, S.S.J.  
Bishop of Pensacola-Tallahassee  
Chairman, Committee on International Policy