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# United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

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February 28, 2008

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice  
Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Rice,

On Tuesday, February 19, Fidel Castro resigned after serving as Cuba's leader for nearly 50 years. This welcome and historic event provides the United States with an important opportunity to reflect upon and reconsider U.S. policy toward Cuba.

Our current policy of isolation and estrangement has failed. Cuba's political system is stable after five decades of American efforts to force change on the island. New laws that tightened sanctions in 1992 and 1996 have had no effect. The administration's 2004 sanctions and its comprehensive plan to bring about transition in Cuba have failed in their objective. The absence of Fidel Castro for 19 months has not led to a change in the system.

Instead, our current policy deprives the United States of influence in Cuba, including the opportunity to promote principles that advance democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. By restricting the ability of Americans to travel freely to Cuba, we limit contact and communication on the part of families, civil society, and government. Likewise, by restricting the ability of our farmers, ranchers, and businesses to trade with Cuba, the United States has made itself irrelevant in Cuba's growing economy, allowing Cuba to build economic partnerships elsewhere.

There is no magic U.S. policy that will transform Cuba. But with Cuba facing a period of change, we have a new opportunity to seize. Our policy based on sanctions, passivity, and waiting should end. We need a new approach that defends human rights, is confident about the value of American engagement with Cubans, builds new economic bridges between America and Cuba, and seeks every possible avenue of increasing American influence.

We urge you to take a fresh look at our policy toward Cuba. We should seize upon Castro's long-awaited and welcome departure to chart a new course that favors hope and engagement over isolation and estrangement.

Respectfully yours,

  
Senator Max Baucus

  
Senator Mike Enzi

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