



Committee On Finance

Max Baucus, Ranking Member

NEWS RELEASE

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**Statement of U.S. Senator Max Baucus
Press Conference Highlighting Successful House and Senate Vote
to Suspend Enforcement of the Cuba Travel Ban**

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) U.S. Senator Max Baucus made the following statement today during a joint Senate-House press conference on the passage of legislation that will suspend enforcement of the Cuba travel ban.

Also in attendance were Sens. Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.), Byron Dorgan (D-N.D.), Larry Craig (R-Ind.) and Reps. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.), William Delahunt (D-Mass.), C.L. Otter (R-Idaho), James McGovern (D-Mass.), Sam Farr (D-Calif.), and others.

"Thank you. I am proud to stand before you with my colleagues today. It has been a long and difficult year in Cuba. The arrests in March of 75 Cuban dissidents sounded an alarm, and injected a sense of urgency into the debate over Cuba policy. Some people saw the arrests as a vindication of the embargo. A sign that Castro remained unrepentant, and that the purpose of U.S. policy should be either to punish him or to outlast him.

Yet, I saw the arrests as an emblem of the embargo, an embargo that isolates the Cuban people and shelters the Cuban government. In this context, the arrests were a watershed event in the debate over Cuba policy. The only question was how the U.S. would respond. Last month, I visited Cuba. And I met with leaders of the dissident movement, including three wives of jailed dissidents. I saw in them a feeling of helplessness and isolation. And I returned to Washington more certain than ever that the time has come to change our policy.

Our victory last week was another watershed event. The House and Senate are united. A majority of the American people support an end to the travel ban. I urge the conferees and the Administration to follow the will of the majority of Congress and allow American citizens to travel to Cuba. Allow relationships to grow between our two nations. And allow the Cuban people to have greater exposure to democracy and a new way of life. It is time."

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