

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:  
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND  
TRANSPORTATION  
FOREIGN RELATIONS  
SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE  
SMALL BUSINESS AND  
ENTREPRENEURSHIP

September 29, 2015

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

As you know, the United Nations General Assembly will vote in the coming weeks on a resolution presented by the Cuban regime calling for an end to the U.S. embargo towards Cuba. While the General Assembly's vote is symbolic, with no binding jurisdiction over the United States Congress, it fails to take into account the plight of those within the island that seek freedom. Much has transpired between the governments of Cuba and the United States in the last nine months. Your administration has made many concessions to the Cuban dictatorship, none of which have been reciprocated. To the contrary, Cuba's rulers, including Raul Castro, whom you are meeting with today, have responded with a dramatic increase in political arrests and other violations of fundamental human rights.

The embargo is critical to denying hard currency to the Cuban regime's monopolies, which history has proven are only used to further oppression and enrich those close to the ruling class. Article 18 of the country's Communist Constitution requires that all foreign trade with the island must be funneled through the state. Until this changes, it is illogical to argue that lifting the embargo would somehow benefit the Cuban people. It is the Cuban dictatorship and its backward political and economic policies -- not the embargo -- that has kept Cuban society from fulfilling its true potential. Throughout the years, the United States has eased many aspects of the trade embargo, as well as travel restrictions to the island, and each time the Cuban dictatorship has manipulated these unilateral policy changes to its benefit. It is well past time for the Cuban government to change its repressive policies, without any further rewards.

Media reports that your Administration is considering abstaining from voting against the anti-embargo resolution are of even greater concern. Regardless of your beliefs, the U.S. embargo toward Cuba is codified in U.S. law and the reasons that it was imposed, including the Cuban government's theft of billions of dollars of private property, remain unaddressed by Havana. Any disagreements over this law, which only regulates transactions by U.S. persons, should be debated in the United States Congress -- not at the United Nations General Assembly.

Furthermore, a failure by your Administration to defend U.S. law at the United Nations General Assembly would send a dangerous message to tyrants throughout the world that the President of the United States refuses to pursue policies changes through the U.S. democratic system and instead seeks to challenge his country's own laws in international fora.

Last, but not least, an abstention by your administration would cripple the efforts of Cuba's growing dissident movement, which is detained and harassed on a daily basis. It would be interpreted as the United States siding with the Cuban dictatorship over the island's courageous democracy activists. Your Administration should instead use this opportunity to encourage the Cuban dictatorship to open its society by allowing freedom of expression, freedom of press, and multi-party elections. It should also demand that the Cuban dictatorship remove the real barriers that limit the Cuban people from economically flourishing. Then, and only then, would it merit the lifting of the embargo.

I intend to watch closely the position your Administration takes when this resolution is debated at the United Nations and consider the Administration's position as key to my advice and consent of involved State Department nominees in the coming months.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'MR', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Marco Rubio  
United States Senator