

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2008 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Joint Resolution 4 (Senator Mooney)
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Freedom for Cuba (Viva Cuba Libre)

This joint resolution expresses support for the Cuban people and for democratic and economic transition in Cuba. The President and Congress are requested not to change current U.S. economic or foreign policy toward Cuba until the Cuban government

- releases all political prisoners;
- respects human rights;
- allows for free and fair elections; and
- allows for the freedom of assembly, association, and press.

The resolution requests that the Maryland General Assembly stand with the President in support of the “Compact with the People of Cuba” and to help Cuba’s transition to democracy. The Cuban government is urged to abide by the Cuban Democracy Act enacted by the U.S. Congress.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Complying with the provisions of this joint resolution promoting freedom for Cuba would not affect State finances or operations.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: The federal Cuban Democracy Act was enacted in 1992 and sets forth U.S. policy with respect to Cuba with the aim of promoting a peaceful transition to democracy in Cuba through the application of appropriate pressures on the Cuban government. The Act includes sanctions against countries that provide assistance to

Cuba and restrictions on foreign-based subsidiaries of U.S. companies from trading with Cuba, travel to Cuba by U.S. citizens, and family remittances to Cuba. The Compact with the People of Cuba is a pledge to support a Cuban transition government as it moves away from a totalitarian communist dictatorship and toward a free and representative democracy.

Background: According to the U.S. State Department, Cuba continues to be a totalitarian state that seeks to control most aspects of Cuban life through the Communist Party and its affiliated mass organizations, the government bureaucracy, and the state security apparatus. The government places severe limitations on freedom of speech and press. Freedom of assembly is not a right in today's Cuba. The law punishes any unauthorized assembly of more than three persons. The government does not tolerate dissent. Although physical torture is rare, cruel treatment of prisoners, particularly political prisoners and detainees, is common.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau over 1.5 million Cuban-Americans live in the United States, with nearly 70% of them living in Florida. Maryland is home to almost 8,000 Cuban-Americans.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): U.S. State Department, Department of Legislative Services

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