



For Immediate Release
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**Floor Statement of Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.)
Regarding the Promoting American Agricultural and Medical Exports to Cuba Act**

Mr. President, this nation and this body have debated divisive trade issues for more than a century. In the 1820s, the cotton, indigo, and rice exporting southern states quarreled with northern states intent on protecting nascent manufacturing industries. In the 1930s, President Hoover's appeals to save American jobs brought the Smoot-Hawley tariff.

Since the Second World War, America has moved to open the world's markets and our own. We are better for it. But divisive trade debates do and will continue. And few debates have been as long and contentious as those regarding our economic sanctions on Cuba.

Mr. President, I am introducing legislation today to bring this divisive debate to an end. I do so not as an ideologue or a partisan. I am neither the Cuban government's friend nor its staunchest enemy. I instead am a Montanan. Like most Montanans, I take no pleasure in disagreement. Like most Montanans, I try to make a deal when I can. And like most Montanans, I stick to the facts.

Here is how I see the facts. Opening Cuba to our exports means money in the pockets of farmers and ranchers across America. Lifting financing and other restrictions on U.S. agriculture could increase U.S. beef exports from states like Montana and Colorado from \$1 million to as much as \$13 million. Lifting these restrictions could allow agricultural exporters in states like North Dakota and Arkansas to obtain nearly 70 percent of Cuba's wheat market, nearly 40 percent of its rice market, and more than 90 percent of its poultry market. And lifting these restrictions could allow America's farmers and ranchers to export as much as \$1.2 billion in total agricultural goods to Cuba.

The facts also show that European and other exporters already reap these benefits. Europe has scrapped its Cuba sanctions. Just last week, EU officials were in Havana calling for full normalization of ties. And those officials made no secret of wanting to solidify ties with Cuba now to get the jump on the United States.

Those are the facts as I see them. But that is not all I see. I am not blind to the Cuban people's suffering or the crimes of their government. I am not deaf to the calls for political and religious freedom just 90 miles off our shores. But I also see that increased trade ties historically have led to improved political ties, whether between Argentina and Brazil in this hemisphere or between former rival nations in Europe.

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Am I certain that increased trade will improve our political ties with Cuba? I am not. But I am certain that we have had these sanctions in place for over five decades. I am certain that five decades of sanctions have made no Cuban freer, no nation more prosperous, and no government more democratic. I am certain that one side has gotten its chance and its way. And I am certain that the status quo must now change.

Here is how I propose to change our status quo with Cuba. My bill, which 15 other Democratic and Republican Senators have joined, would help U.S. farmers and ranchers sell their products to Cuba by facilitating cash payment for agricultural goods, authorizing direct transfers between U.S. and Cuban banks, and creating a U.S. agricultural export promotion fund. This bill also eases restrictions on exports of medicines and medical devices. And it allows all Americans to travel to Cuba – not just one particular group.

John Stuart Mill wrote that “Commerce first taught nations to see with goodwill the wealth and prosperity of one another. Before, the patriot...wished all countries weak, poor, and ill-governed but his own...” For too long, America has stood atop our barricade of sanctions and looked down upon a weak, poor, and ill-governed Cuba. Let us now open our commerce with Cuba. And let us wish them wealth, prosperity, and an abundance of all that we value and hold dear in America.

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