

KATHY CASTOR
11TH DISTRICT, FLORIDA

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REGIONAL WHIP



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0911

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November 18, 2009

Daniel Restrepo
Senior Director for Western Hemisphere Affairs
National Security Council
Eisenhower Executive Office Building, Room 340
1650 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20504

RE: Cuban American family travel – addition of Tampa International Airport as authorized departure point

Dear Mr. Restrepo:

In April, President Obama lifted travel restrictions on Cuban American families. However, no new points of U.S. departure were granted in the subsequent months. The extremely limited number of U.S. exit/entry airports in effect penalizes families who seek to travel to and from Cuba. I respectfully request an opportunity to speak with you directly about adding at least one other U.S. departure point to Cuba – Tampa International Airport (TIA).

Following President Obama's direction to lift travel restrictions to Cuba so families can visit their relatives, the number of U.S. travelers to Cuba has nearly tripled from 10,000 per month to nearly 30,000 per month. Florida remains the center of the Cuban-American community and requires a departure point in Tampa to adequately give effect to the President's direction.

This dramatic increase for travel to Cuba has exacerbated an already existing need for a substantial increase in the number of direct air charter flights from the U.S. to Cuba. Currently, there are several air charter companies operating flights from Miami to Cuba, but none from the Tampa Bay area, even though it has one of the largest concentrations of Cuban-Americans in the United States. President Obama's decision to ease travel restrictions means that we should do all we can to make travel to Cuba for families both more convenient and more affordable.

According to the U.S. Census data, the Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater SMSA has the 5th largest population of Cuban-Americans (66,963) of the SMSA's within the United

States. When nearby Orlando-Kissimmee (25,417), Lakeland (7,146), Jacksonville (7,541) and Sarasota-Bradenton (3,797), are included over 110,000 Cuban-Americans would have easy access to TIA. There is a significant expense involved with travel to airports other than TIA. It costs an additional \$400-500 for an individual to travel to Miami to Cuba – this is in addition to the travel costs to Cuba.

My office deals with the personal family struggles that limited travel opportunities bring about on a regular basis. Sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, and grandsons and granddaughters are often unable to visit sick or dying relatives in Cuba. Before the President lifted the travel ban, in their quest to travel to Cuba to say goodbye or comfort a loved one, my neighbors were subjected to the worst kind of bureaucratic red tape. Unfortunately, even with the lifting of official restrictions, the lack of departure point to Cuba in our area continues to be a barrier for many families. The addition of Tampa International Airport as a departure point for charter flights to Cuba will be one less burden these families have to face. Cutting out the extra \$500 it can take to depart from Miami will make the trip more affordable for my neighbors.

Implementation of this nonstop air charter service from Tampa International Airport would be fully coordinated with Tampa International Airport, Transportation Security Administration and Customs & Border Protection officials to ensure that flights are scheduled during standard airport operating hours avoiding additional costs that might result from officials having to work overtime. Louis E. Miller, the Executive Director of the Tampa International Airport, is in full support of this request that could provide an added access point to the thousands of Cuban-American families that live in and around my Tampa Bay district.

I appreciate your consideration of this request and the opportunity to discuss this issue with you further.

Respectfully,

Kathy Castor

Kathy Castor
U.S. Representative
Florida – District 11

I look forward to speaking with you. It has been eight months since the President's announcement and this year is important — and would be a great holiday gesture for families.

KATHY CASTOR
11TH DISTRICT, FLORIDA

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AIR AND LAND FORCES SUBCOMMITTEE
TERRORISM AND UNCONVENTIONAL THREATS
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December 16, 2008

President-Elect Barack Obama
Transition Office
451 6th St NW
Washington, DC 20270

Re: Urge Executive Order Action to Alter Current Cuba Family Travel and Remittances
Limitations

Dear Mr. President-Elect:

Your historic election provides an opportunity to make important changes both here at home and abroad. I respectfully urge you to breathe fresh air into our relationships with our neighbors in Latin America and the Caribbean and to modernize policies relating to Cuba. I encourage you to lift the restrictions that limit family travel to Cuba and limit the amount of remittance that families may send to relatives in Cuba through an executive order soon after your inauguration in 2009.

Currently, a federal executive order limits travel to Cuba to once every three years and limits monetary remittances to family members in Cuba to \$300 annually. The current restrictions on family travel and remittances to Cuba bring hardship to the people of Cuba and their family members here in America, many of whom live in my home state of Florida and are my neighbors here in Tampa Bay. The restrictions have proven ineffective in altering the political situation and interfere with fundamental family relations and human rights. By lifting the burdensome restrictions we can provide relief to families while maintaining the pressure for human rights and change the island needs.

My office deals with the personal family struggles that these limitations bring on a regular basis. Sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, and grandsons and granddaughters are unable to visit sick or dying relatives in Cuba. In their quest to travel to Cuba to say goodbye or comfort a loved one, they are subjected to the worst kind of bureaucratic red tape because of the restrictions.

We saw the devastating effects of the restrictions this summer when Hurricane Gustav wreaked havoc on Cuba. Cuban Americans were unable to provide direct humanitarian assistance to their family members in their time of need. I was proud to

join with you at that time in calling for an emergency suspension of restrictions. You understand the personal toll this takes on families.

Clearly, the Castro regime and its half-century of oppression demand circumspection. The regime has visited torture, human rights abuses and terrorism on its own citizens. We must develop a rational and detailed plan to modernize the relationship going forward. The irrational inequity between the treatment of Cuban citizens and Haitian citizens under the law also must be revisited.

As Americans, we cannot allow our policies to bring more hardship to those we intend to help. As Floridians, we cannot expect the Cuban people, many of whom are family to us, to endure more pain. Therefore, I urge you to lift current restrictions on family travel to Cuba and remittances. Doing so will not only provide relief to thousands of people, but will show our commitment to the Cuban people and their families here in America. Then, I encourage you to review and develop a renewed, modern plan for Latin America and Caribbean basin.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment. I look forward to working with you as we renew America's security and standing abroad, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean. Please feel free to contact me if I can be of assistance in the matter at 813-871-2817 or 202-225-3376.

Sincerely,



Kathy Castor
U.S. Representative
Florida - District 11

KATHY CASTOR
11TH DISTRICT, FLORIDA

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February 3, 2009

Tom Winkowski, Assistant Commissioner
United States Customs & Border Protection
Office of Field Operations
1400 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20229

Dear Mr. Winkowski:

I am writing to request that you utilize the authority granted to you as Assistant Commissioner to give consideration to adding Tampa International Airport to the current list of cities designated under Title 19 CFR, Chapter 1, Part 122, Section 122.153 as authorized ports of entry/exit for U.S.-Cuba air charter flights. As you know, the current airports with the ability to fly to Cuba under this provision include Miami, New York and Los Angeles. Louis E. Miller, the Executive Director of the Tampa International Airport, is in full support of this request that could provide an added access point to the thousands of Cuban-American families that live in and around my Tampa Bay district.

According to the U.S. Census data, the Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater SMSA has the 5th largest population of Cuban-Americans (66,963) of the SMSA's within the United States; and, if you include Orlando-Kissimmee (25,417), Lakeland (7,146), Jacksonville (7,541) and Sarasota-Bradenton (3,797), which totals over 110,000 people, with 71% of these Cuban-Americans living less than an hour's drive to the Airport.

I have called on President Obama to fulfill his campaign promise and lift travel restrictions on Cuban-Americans wishing to visit family members in Cuba. With this anticipated move the number of U.S. travelers to Cuba is expected to nearly triple from the current 10,000 per month to nearly 30,000 per month. This dramatic increase for travel to Cuba will consequently create a need for a substantial increase in the number of direct air charter flights from the U.S. to Cuba from the current 3 flights a day to approximately eight to ten flights per day. Currently, there are seven air charter companies operating flights from Miami to Cuba, but no flights originate from one of the largest concentrations of Cuban-Americans living in the Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater Metropolitan Area.

My office deals with the personal family struggles that travel restrictions bring on a regular basis. Sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, and grandsons and granddaughters are

unable to visit sick or dying relatives in Cuba. In their quest to travel to Cuba to say goodbye or comfort a loved one, they are subjected to the worst kind of bureaucratic red tape because of the restrictions. The addition of Tampa International Airport as a departure point for charter flights to Cuba may be one less burden these families have to face.

Implementation of this nonstop air charter service from Tampa International Airport would be fully coordinated with Tampa International Airport, Transportation Security Administration and Customs & Border Protection officials to insure that flights are scheduled during standard airport operating hours avoiding additional costs that might result from officials having to work overtime.

I appreciate your consideration of this request and if you have any questions or require additional information, please feel free to contact me or Louis E. Miller at your convenience. His email address is lmiller@tampairport.com and his telephone number is (813) 870-8705.

Respectfully,



Kathy Castor
U.S. Representative
Florida – District 11

cc: Louis E. Miller, Executive Director
Tampa International Airport

KATHY CASTOR
11TH DISTRICT, FLORIDA

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April 14, 2009

Timothy Geithner, Secretary of the Treasury
Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20220

RE: President Obama's Direction for Cuban American travel – addition of Tampa International Airport as authorized departure point

Dear Secretary Geithner:

I respectfully request the addition of Tampa International Airport to the current list of cities designated under Title 19 CFR, Chapter I, Part 122, Section 122.153 as authorized ports of entry/exit for U.S.-Cuba air charter flights. Only three airports currently are authorized to serve as departure points of entry/exit to Cuba - Miami, New York and Los Angeles.

With President Obama's direction to lift travel restrictions to Cuba so families can visit their relatives, the number of U.S. travelers to Cuba is expected to nearly triple from the current 10,000 per month to nearly 30,000 per month. In the hours after President Obama's announcement travel agents in the Tampa area were already reporting record phone calls and requests for flights to Cuba.

According to the U.S. Census data, the Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater SMSA has the 5th largest population of Cuban-Americans (66,963) of the SMSA's within the United States. When nearby Orlando-Kissimmee (25,417), Lakeland (7,146), Jacksonville (7,541) and Sarasota-Bradenton (3,797), are included over 110,000 Cuban-Americans would have easy access to Tampa International Airport.

This dramatic increase for travel to Cuba will create a need for a substantial increase in the number of direct air charter flights from the U.S. to Cuba. Currently, there are several air charter companies operating flights from Miami to Cuba, but none from the Tampa Bay area which has one of the largest concentrations of Cuban-Americans in the United States.

My office deals with the personal family struggles that past limited travel opportunities brought on a regular basis. Sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, and grandsons and granddaughters were unable to visit sick or dying relatives in Cuba. In their quest to travel to

Cuba to say goodbye or comfort a loved one, they were subjected to the worst kind of bureaucratic red tape because of those restrictions I am convinced that the lack of departure point to Cuba in our area will continue to be a barrier for many families. The addition of Tampa International Airport as a departure point for charter flights to Cuba will be one less burden these families have to face.

Implementation of this nonstop air charter service from Tampa International Airport would be fully coordinated with Tampa International Airport, Transportation Security Administration and Customs & Border Protection officials to ensure that flights are scheduled during standard airport operating hours avoiding additional costs that might result from officials having to work overtime. Louis E. Miller, the Executive Director of the Tampa International Airport, is in full support of this request that could provide an added access point to the thousands of Cuban-American families that live in and around my Tampa Bay district.

I appreciate your consideration of this request. If you have any questions or require additional information, please feel free to contact me or Louis E. Miller at your convenience. His email address is lmiller@tampaairport.com and his telephone number is (813) 870-8705.

Respectfully,



Kathy Castor
U.S. Representative
Florida – District 11

CC: Gary Locke, Secretary of Commerce
Hillary Clinton, Secretary of State
Rahm Emmanuel, White House Chief of Staff
Louis E. Miller, Executive Director, Tampa International Airport
Frank Sanchez