



STATE OF MINNESOTA

Office of Governor Tim Pawlenty

130 State Capitol ♦ 75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard ♦ Saint Paul, MN 55155

April 25, 2008

The Honorable James Metzen
President of the Senate
322 State Capitol Building
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155

Dear President Metzen:

I have vetoed and am returning Senate File 599, a legislative resolution urging Congress and the President to end trade, financial, and travel restrictions to Cuba.

I am aware of the desire of Minnesota's agriculture community to increase trade with Cuba. However, this non-binding resolution is not appropriate and would not further that goal.

Minnesota farmers produce some of the best agricultural products in the world. Current federal policy allows for the sale of food, agricultural products, and medicine with Cuba. As Governor, I have sought to expand the global reach of our state's goods and services. However, it is important that we do so in a manner that is consistent with our country's foreign policy.

Current federal law and U.S. State Department policy already provide Minnesota producers with opportunities to expand the sale of agricultural and other marketable goods to Cuban citizens. Without fundamental change in the Cuban government, removing current trade restrictions would not necessarily increase sales of Minnesota agricultural products in Cuba. In 2007, the U.S. government authorized more than \$3.6 billion in agricultural product sales to Cuba. However, Cuba elected to purchase less than 1/7 of that amount. Accordingly, there is room for an expansion of sales to Cuba under current policy.

Moreover, our federal government should address foreign policy matters, not state legislatures. Forwarding this resolution to the federal government would have Minnesota promoting a position that is contradictory to the long-standing policy of the United States. That policy has been adhered to and supported by both parties for decades.

The Cuban government is totalitarian. Most of Cuba's economy is state-owned, private property rights are essentially disregarded, and Cuba's human rights record is poor. Significant progress needs to be made before the United States should consider establishing full diplomatic and

Senator Metzen/SF 599

Page 2

April 25, 2008

commercial relations with Cuba. Providing more economic opportunity for Cuba through trade will enable and empower the current regime.

The Organization of American States (OAS) brings together all 35 nations from the Western Hemisphere, including the United States, to strengthen cooperation on democratic values, promote human rights, and address shared problems. Although Cuba is listed as a member, the OAS has excluded the government of Cuba from participation in the OAS.

In 2001, governments of the OAS member nations adopted the "Inter-American Democratic Charter" which provides: "cooperation between American states require the political organization of those states based on the effective exercise of representative democracy." This charter outlined numerous additional economic development objectives for trade between nations, all of which were fundamentally underpinned by governmental acceptance of representative democracy. Cuba has yet to meet this standard in any meaningful way.

Ultimately, expanded trade with Cuba will occur only when there is fundamental change in Cuba's government.

It is unfortunate that the Legislature passed a bill that completely contradicts a long history of U.S. policy against a totalitarian nation. We are hopeful that someday the Cuban government will make the changes necessary to join other democracies and avail itself of the opportunity to import even more Minnesota grown products.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Pawlenty', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Tim Pawlenty
Governor

- Cc: Senator Lawrence J. Pogemiller, Majority Leader
Senator David Senjem, Minority Leader
Senator Jim Vickerman
Representative Margaret Anderson Kelliher, Speaker of the House
Representative Marty Seifert, Minority Leader
Representative Phyllis Kahn
Mr. Patrick E. Flahaven, Secretary of the Senate
Mr. Al Mathiowetz, Chief Clerk of the House of Representatives
Mr. Mark Ritchie, Secretary of State