

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HJM 4018

As Reported by House Committee On:
Trade & Economic Development

Brief Description: Petitioning to end restrictions on trade with Cuba.

Sponsors: Representatives Veloria, Morell, Grant, Mastin, Chase, Clements, Hunt, Santos, Schoesler and Haigh.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Trade & Economic Development: 1/25/02, 1/29/02 [DP].

<p>Brief Summary of Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">· Petitions the Congress to end trade restrictions with Cuba.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRADE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Veloria, Chair; Eickmeyer, Vice Chair; Van Luven, Ranking Minority Member; Ahern, Chase, Fromhold and Gombosky.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Dunn and Mulliken.

Staff: Chris Cordes (786-7103).

Background:

Since 1961 the United States has imposed an economic embargo on Cuba under various laws, including the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 and the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996 (generally known as the Helms-Burton Act). Some of the embargo restrictions were eased in the Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act of 2000. This 2000 law terminated existing, unilateral agricultural or medical sanctions with Cuba and other specified countries, with some exceptions. It allows the secretary of the treasury to authorize, on a case-by-case basis, travel to Cuba for the commercial export sale of agricultural commodities. However, the law prohibits payment or financing the sales of agricultural commodities to Cuba by

United States persons or entities.

Summary of Bill:

The Washington Senate and House of Representatives petition the president of the United States and the Congress to end the policy of restrictions on trade with Cuba, and present the following information:

- Washington, as a leading agricultural state, has a historical and economic interest in promoting and expanding its agricultural market to Cuba. The agricultural market is weakened without economic access to neighboring countries.
 - Although Washington ranks twelfth in the nation for agricultural products, accounting for approximately \$29 billion of the state's economy, there are not enough apple, wheat, and potato markets in Washington.
 - Federal law has liberalized sanctions on exports of agricultural commodities to Cuba, but full access is limited by continuing restrictions.
 - An overwhelming majority of American people support normalization of relations with Cuba, according to polling results.
 - The Washington Legislature is committed to working diligently toward the goal of full normalization of relations with Cuba.
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Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

Testimony For: It is a top priority of the agricultural community to open more markets for Washington's agricultural products. Trade with Cuba has begun for the first time in 40 years, but restrictions limit its ability to help the farm community. It should be a policy to support free trade. Resumption of normal trade relations with Cuba is long overdue. These sanctions have been counterproductive and changing U.S. policy will help create jobs.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: (in support) Representative Bill Grant; Mike Kayser; Linda Johnson, Washington State Farm Bureau; Bill Center, Washington Council on International Trade; Paul Thomas; and Janet Leister, Washington State Department of Agriculture.