

Statement on Action on Title III of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996
January 16, 1998

Today I am notifying the Congress of my decision to suspend for an additional 6 months the right of U.S. nationals to file suit against foreign firms trafficking in confiscated properties in Cuba. This decision is consistent with my strong commitment to implement the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act (LIBERTAD Act) in a way that best advances U.S. national interests and hastens a peaceful transition to democracy in Cuba.

I have taken this action to continue the effort we began in July 1996 to strengthen international cooperation in the effort to promote democracy in Cuba. I said last January and reaffirmed last July that I expected to continue suspending this provision of the LIBERTAD Act so long as our friends and allies continue their stepped-up efforts to promote a democratic transition in Cuba. I made this decision to take advantage of the growing realization throughout the world, in Europe and Latin America especially, that Cuba must change. We and our allies agree on the importance of promoting democracy, human rights, and fundamental freedoms in Cuba, and on the vital need for a peaceful transition to democracy on the island.

In the past 18 months, we have worked with our allies and friends to support concrete measures that promote peaceful change in Cuba. The international community is more united behind the cause of freedom in Cuba, and Fidel Castro is more isolated than ever before.

The European Union (EU) has reaffirmed its historic Common Position that, consistent with Europe's traditional democratic values, binds the 15 member nations to promote human rights and democracy in Cuba. The EU and its member states have strongly urged the Cuban Government to release imprisoned dissidents and stop the harassment of those who seek peaceful democratic change. Recently, they have gone further and created an EU Working Group on Human Rights among their embassies in Havana. This will help coordinate the EU's human rights efforts in Cuba.

The international effort is not confined to Europe. Under Secretary of State Stuart Eizenstat made a trip to four Central American countries

to energize their efforts to promote change in Cuba, with positive results. At the Ibero-American Summit in Venezuela in November 1997, leaders from Latin America and Europe made clear their position in favor of democracy and human rights. At the United Nations General Assembly in December, more countries than ever before cosponsored the resolution supporting human rights in Cuba.

Nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) are increasing their support for dissidents on the island and maintaining international attention to repression in Cuba. The Dutch organization, Pax Christi, noting the historic and spiritual importance of the visit of the Pope this month, has continued its call for political change in Cuba. Amnesty International called on Cuba to release the four dissidents of the Dissident Working Group who were arrested in July.

Business groups have also been active in the effort. The Trans Atlantic Business Dialogue, composed of chief executive officers of leading European and U.S. corporations, called for businesses operating internationally to observe "best business practices" and to support human rights in international operations, including in Cuba. On January 7 in Washington, DC, the North American Committee of the National Policy Association sponsored a major conference on best business practices in Cuba. This committee includes over 100 representatives from business, labor, and the academic community in the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

As the multinational effort has moved forward, we have continued our vigorous implementation of title IV of the LIBERTAD Act, which denies entry to the U.S. of executives of firms that traffic in confiscated property in Cuba. Our implementation efforts have had a significant impact. Several companies have withdrawn from commitments or altered their plans in Cuba in order to avoid determinations of trafficking. We will continue implementation of title IV as we work to conclude our negotiations with the EU on developing investment disciplines regarding confiscated property.

The U.S.-led international approach to promote democracy in Cuba must be preserved,

Jan. 16 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1998

expanded, and strengthened. We will continue working with our friends and allies to develop comprehensive, effective measures to promote democracy in Cuba.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Action on Title III of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996

January 16, 1998

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Pursuant to subsection 306(c)(2) of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996 (Public Law 104–114), (the “Act”), I hereby determine and report to the Congress that suspension for 6 months beyond February 1, 1998, of the right to bring an action under title III of the Act is necessary to the national interests of the United States and will expedite a transition to democracy in Cuba.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Jesse Helms, chairman, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; Ted Stevens, chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations; Benjamin A. Gilman, chairman, House Committee on International Relations; and Robert L. Livingston, chairman, House Committee on Appropriations.

The President’s Radio Address

January 17, 1998

Good morning. Today I want to talk about the steps we must take to protect our children and the public health from one of the greatest threats they face, tobacco. For years, tobacco companies have sworn they do not market their deadly products to children, but this week disturbing documents came to light that confirm our worst suspicions.

For years, one of our Nation’s biggest tobacco companies appears to have singled out our children, carefully studying their habits and pursuing a marketing strategy designed to prey on their insecurities in order to get them to smoke.

Let me read you two of the most startling lines from an internal tobacco company presentation proposing a marketing campaign targeted at children as young as 14. Quote, “Our strategy becomes clear: direct advertising appeal to younger smokers.” Younger smokers, this document says also, and I quote, “represent tomorrow’s cigarette business.” The message of these documents is all too clear: Marketing to children sells cigarettes.

Today I want to send a very different message to those who would endanger our children:

Young people are not the future of the tobacco industry; they are the future of America. And we must take immediate, decisive action to protect them.

We know that every day 3,000 young people will start smoking, and 1,000 of them will die prematurely due to tobacco-related disease. We know that 90 percent of adults who smoke—90 percent—began using tobacco before the age of 18. That is why, starting in 1995, we launched a historic nationwide effort with the FDA to stop our children from smoking before they start, reducing their access to tobacco products and severely restricting tobacco companies from advertising to young people. The balanced budget agreement I signed into law last summer includes a \$24 billion children’s health initiative, providing health coverage to up to 5 million uninsured children, paid for by tobacco taxes.

But even these efforts are not enough to fully protect our children from the dangers of smoking. To do that, we need comprehensive bipartisan legislation. Last September I proposed five key elements that must be at the heart of that legislation. First, and most important, it must