**PROPOSED BILL NO:**

**NAME OF PROPOSED BILL:** Remove the United States’ Cuban Trade Embargo

**Sponsor:** Neil Oppenheimer

**Co-Sponsor:** Mike Tyler

**Opposition Leader:**

**Summary:**

Remove the United States’ trade embargo, including travel restrictions, on Cuba. Use this opportunity to promote trade and tourism between the countries, and to strongly encourage Cuba to improve its human rights policies and adopt democratic reforms.

**Background:**

Fidel Castro took control of Cuba in 1959. Shortly thereafter, he nationalized U.S. assets in the country.

In response to Cuba nationalizing U.S. assets and aligning itself with communist countries, the United States sought to remove Castro from power by imposing a trade embargo on Cuba.

The embargo began in 1962 and is still in effect.

**Facts:**

Cuba is 90 miles from Florida.

Fidel Castro and his brother, Raul, continue to remain in power 53 years after the embargo started.

The embargo is not absolute. For example, some U.S. agricultural and medical products can be sold to Cuba. However, U.S. law requires Cuba to pay cash for all imports. In 2013, the U.S. exported $359 million worth of goods to Cuba.

The U.S. imports nothing from Cuba.

For approximately 20 years, the United Nations General Assembly has voted each year for a resolution calling on the U.S. to end the trade embargo. In 2013, the vote was 188-2 in favor of the resolution, with only Israel joining the U.S. in opposition.

Cuba is one of four countries currently considered by the U.S. to be a “state sponsor of terrorism”.

Legislation enacted subsequent to the imposition of the embargo requires that it not be lifted unless Cuba respects “internationally accepted standards of human rights” and “democratic values.”

The U.S. has trade relations with countries that have a record of human rights violations, including China and Vietnam.

Congressional approval is required to completely lift the embargo.

**Pros:**

The embargo has not achieved its primary goal. The Castros remain in control of Cuba, 53 years after the embargo started.

Exceptions to the embargo have impacted its effectiveness.

Many U.S. concerns from the Cold War are no longer relevant. For example, fear of communism spreading throughout the region.

Removing the embargo and travel ban will increase trade between the U.S. and Cuba, producing economic benefits for both countries.

Cuba is not a significant military threat to the U.S or its allies in the area.

The embargo does not harm the government, as intended, but rather the Cuban people.

The annual United Nations vote indicates most of the world opposes the embargo. Removal of the embargo will improve the United States’ standing in the international community.

**Cons:**

Cuba has not met the legislative conditions required to lift the embargo. Examples of these conditions are legalizing political activities, recognizing human rights, and holding free and fair elections.

The embargo provides the U.S. with leverage to pressure Cuba to improve human rights and adopt democratic reforms.

Cuba has supported acts of terrorism.

The U.S. should not change its policy until it knows who will succeed Raul Castro.

**Details:**

The U.S. State Department will conduct a review to determine if Cuba should be removed from the Department’s list of state sponsors of terrorism. This review, which is to be completed within 6 months, will consider whether Cuba has supported international terrorism over the past year and whether it has renounced the use of terrorism. If the State Department recommends Cuba’s removal from the list, the President must approve the recommendation before removal occurs. Removal of Cuba from this terrorism list is required before complete removal of the trade embargo will occur.

Previous legislation that contains requirements to remove the embargo will be amended to remove these requirements.

Diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Cuba will be re-established and sufficient funding will be provided to establish an embassy in Cuba.

Negotiations with Cuba about the removal of the trade embargo will include an expectation of a commitment by Cuba to improve its human rights policies and to adopt democratic reforms, as conditions for removal of the trade embargo.

Removal of the embargo will occur in phases so as to not overwhelm Cuba’s economy and government.

Cuba will no longer be required to pay cash for products it purchases.