United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0905

June 3, 2009

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write today regarding your pledge to allow greater telecommunications links with Cuba by issuing regulations pursuant to the 1992 Cuba Democracy Act. As you craft those regulations, we urge you to ensure that any telecommunications agreements with the Cuban Government would in fact open lines of communication with the Cuban people, and would not allow the Cuban Government to monitor or control information.

Totalitarian regimes have long sought to control the flow of information to their people. For decades, a cornerstone of the United States' promotion of democracy has been to provide objective news and information to people suffering under totalitarian rule. With that history in mind, the 1992 Cuban Democracy Act permitted telecommunications services between the United States and Cuba, with the goal of increasing the free flow of information to the Cuban people.

We hope that the Cuban government will allow U.S. telecommunications companies to provide direct links and services, increasing the flow of information to and from the island. But we want to prevent what has happened in China, where U.S. telecommunications firms have aided the Chinese government in its efforts to control internet content and monitor internet users. On August 8, 2006, a Human Rights Watch report, "Race to the Bottom: Corporate Complicity in Chinese Internet Censorship," detailed how U.S. telecommunications companies have even provided the identity of users to Chinese authorities, resulting in the imprisonment of four Chinese government critics. In addition, U.S. companies censor internet searches and block numerous websites.

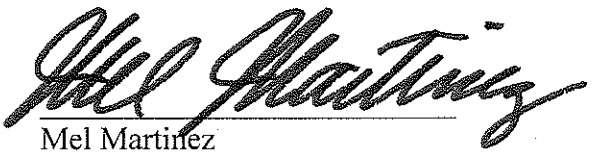
We request that regulations authorizing telecommunications links with Cuba clearly stipulate that U.S. telecommunications firms cannot engage in any activities that would suppress or violate the human rights of the Cuban people. We believe that the list of prohibited activities should include providing the Cuban Government with data or IP-address information that could reveal the identity of individual users, creating a separate infrastructure for tourists, and providing any equipment, software or technical expertise that would enable the Cuban Government to block internet applications or content. Given the important human rights implications of these transactions, the Department of State should

carefully review all license applications and agreements. Finally, we would ask that you prohibit "side agreements," to ensure that the Cuban Government not create the type of "walled" internet that currently exists in China.

Increased telecommunication links with Cuba should have the goal of providing the Cuban people with objective information, from a variety of sources, and free contact with the outside world — rights that we take for granted, and would fight to defend. As your Administration crafts the regulations authorizing greater telecommunications links with Cuba, we urge you to make this priority clear.

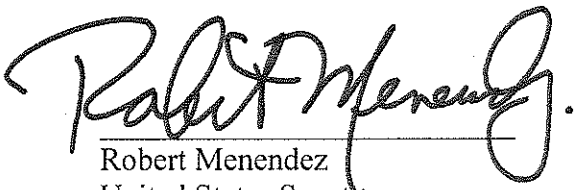
Sincerely,

Bill Nelson
United States Senator



Mel Martinez
United States Senator

Joe Lieberman
United States Senator



Robert Menendez
United States Senator