

February 16, 2011



Senator Marco Rubio  
United States Senate  
B40A Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Rubio:

The Greater Tampa Chamber of Commerce respectfully asks that you withdraw Amendment 61 from the FAA Air Transportation Modernization and Safety Improvement Act and allow Tampa International Airport to become a port of entry and exit for Cuba travel.

The Tampa community has a historical tie to Cuba. Before the US Embargo against Cuba began in 1960, Tampa served as a major gateway to Cuba. In fact, Tampa's history of trade with Cuba goes back to the 1850s – well before Miami was an established community. Tampa is also home to the second oldest Cuban American community and the cigar industry. According to the 2009 American Community Survey, the Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater MSA has the 4th largest population of Cuban-Americans at 80,573 within the United States. Additionally, there are 7,146 Cuban-Americans residing in Lakeland and 3,797 Cuban-Americans residing in the Sarasota-Bradenton area who are all served by Tampa International Airport bringing our regional impact to the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest.

The Chamber fully supports the January 14 easing of travel restrictions as these new regulations alleviate the current onerous travel costs to both Cuban Americans as well as those businesses currently engaged in legal trade activities. Amendment 61 creates an unfair competitive disadvantage to businesses outside of the Miami area. Your constituencies in Tampa Bay, Jacksonville, Orlando, Fort Lauderdale, Key West and many other cities across the state endure burdensome cost and inconvenience when traveling to Cuba. It is also our understanding that other cities across the country, including Charlotte, Dallas, and Atlanta are seeking to become ports of entry and exit as well. We respectfully ask that you allow the easing of these restrictions to remain in place.

On behalf of the Tampa Bay business community, I sincerely hope that you will withdraw Amendment 61 in order to more accurately reflect the resolve of the entire state as opposed to the interests of a few.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob Rohrlack".

Robert J. Rohrlack, Jr., CEcD  
President and CEO

CC: Florida Congressional Delegation, Joe Lopano

[www.tampachamber.com](http://www.tampachamber.com)