Passed 8-0-1 (Sabbagh)

RESOLUTION 01-12

RESOLUTION ON THE DENIAL OF VISAS TO LEADERS FROM SANTA CLARA, CUBA INVITED TO ATTEND THE U.S.-CUBA SISTER CITIES ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE IN BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA

WHEREAS, in November of 1998 the City of Bloomington, by unanimous action of the Common Council in Resolution 98-19, expressed support and encouragement for the development of an official sister-city relationship with Santa Clara, Cuba for the purpose of facilitating people-to-people exchanges between our two communities; and

WHEREAS, a delegation of local citizens, including two members of the Common Council, traveled to Santa Clara, Cuba in May of last year, were hosted by local leaders in Santa Clara, and toured schools, hospitals, farms, and other areas of local interest; and

WHEREAS, the U.S.-Cuba Sister Cities Association held its third national conference in Bloomington, Indiana on the weekend of June 9-10, 2001, hosted by the Bloomington-Santa Clara sister city project – "CubAmistad;" and

WHEREAS, three local leaders from Santa Clara, Cuba were invited to attend the conference in Bloomington, Indiana, but were subsequently denied visas by the U.S. State Department and U.S. Interests Section in Havana, along with other Cuban conference invitees, and were thus prevented from entering the United States; and

WHEREAS, the decision to deny visas to the conference invitees from Cuba interfered with the ability of the Bloomington-Santa Clara sister city project to engage in meaningful people-to-people exchanges through having local leaders from Santa Clara, Cuba visit Bloomington, Indiana; and

WHEREAS, United States policy towards Cuba imposes significant restrictions on the rights of U.S. citizens to travel abroad to visit Cuba should they choose to do so, and imposes potential criminal penalties for violating such regulations, further hindering the ability of Bloomington, Indiana citizens to engage in people-to-people relationships with citizens of Santa Clara, Cuba; and

WHEREAS, citizens of the United States and Cuba would mutually benefit from normalized relations and more constructive cultural and economic exchange between our two countries;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED BY THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BLOOMINGTON, MONROE COUNTY, INDIANA, THAT:

SECTION 1. The Common Council of the City of Bloomington objects to the decision of the U.S. State Department and U.S. Interests Section in Havana to deny visas to those citizens of Santa Clara, Cuba who were invited to attend the national conference of the U.S.-Cuba Sister City Association in Bloomington, Indiana.

SECTION 2. The Common Council further urges U.S. elected officials at the federal level, including Indiana's congressional delegation, to explore policies aimed at normalizing relations with Cuba, that will ensure U.S. citizens the right to travel freely to Cuba, and that will allow genuine people-to-people exchanges, both cultural and economic, to the mutual benefit the people of Cuba and the United States.

SECTION 3. The Common Council directs the City Clerk to forward copies of this signed resolution to members of Indiana's congressional delegation.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Common Council of the City of Bloomington, Monroe County, Indiana, upon this 11th day of July, 2001.

PATRICIA COLE, President
Bloomington Common Council

ATTEST:

REGINA MOORE, Clerk
City of Bloomington

PRESENTED by me to the Mayor of the City of Bloomington, Monroe County, Indiana, upon this 12th day of July, 2001.

REGINA MOORE, Clerk
City of Bloomington

SIGNED and APPROVED by me upon this 12 day of July, 2001.

JOHN FERNANDEZ, Mayor
City of Bloomington

SYNOPSIS

This resolution is sponsored by Chris Gaal and objects to the denial of visas for the citizens of Santa Clara, Cuba who were invited to attend the Third National Conference of the U.S.- Cuba Sister City Association in Bloomington, Indiana on June 9th and 10th, 2001. The U.S. State Department and the U.S. Interests Section in Havana made the decision, and this resolution urges U.S. elected officials at a federal level to explore policies aimed at normalizing relations with Cuba in order for genuine people-to-people exchanges to occur between the citizens of Cuba and the United States. It also directs the City Clerk to forward signed copies of this resolution to members of the Indiana congressional delegation.

Signed copies to:
Indiana Congressional Delegation (12)
US-Cuba Sister City Association