

Cuba shift draws criticisms from all sides

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- U.S. President Obama's decision to ease travel restrictions to Cuba has drawn criticisms from both sides of the U.S.-Cuba policy debate.

Some advocates for lifting the travel ban entirely say Obama's move didn't go far enough, and now look to Congress to press their case, The Miami Herald reported Wednesday.

"A lot of people, myself included, who had some hope that Obama would move in a more constructive way, are now beginning to place our hopes in the Congress," said Wayne Smith, a former head of the U.S. Interests Section in Havana and now a critic of U.S.-Cuba policy. "My understanding was that (the administration) had signaled a willingness to go further."

Denis McDonough, director of strategic communications at the National Security Council, said future changes weren't ruled out, but said it was reasonable for the administration "to take a hard look at how these changes are implemented and ... what kind of reaction and development that these changes catalyze."

Meanwhile, nearly every Cuban-American member of Congress criticized the administration for allowing Cuban-Americans to send unlimited amounts of cash to Cuba without securing concessions from Havana.

"It's a missed opportunity to not have first demanded from the Castro regime a drastic reduction in the outrageously high fees that families have to pay to the regime and its agents for both travel and remittances," Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, R-Fla., said.

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