

By Senator Collins

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Senate Resolution

A resolution condemning the tyrannical Cuban government and the Tampa City Council member and Hillsborough County officials who, on March 3, 2023, entertained the Cuban ambassador and other Cuban officials at a dinner meeting in Tampa in complete disregard of the brutality of the Cuban regime and the blood that has been shed by those who rose up in opposition.

WHEREAS, on January 1, 1959, Fidel Castro and his guerilla army overthrew dictator Fulgencio Batista's government in Havana, Cuba, and on February 16, 1959, Fidel Castro was sworn in as Cuba's prime minister, and

WHEREAS, after flirting with relationships with the United States and other nations, the Cuban government in 1960 officially became an ally of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (Soviet Union), with Fidel Castro officially announcing the alliance on March 1, 1961, and

WHEREAS, the relationship with the Soviet Union, which was founded on communist principles that saw churches closed and schools indoctrinating school-age children, continued until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, which began the "Special Period" of financial and political crisis in Cuba, and

WHEREAS, Fidel Castro engaged, and the regime continues to engage, in abominable human rights violations, including the execution or indefinite detainment of many persons opposing the regime, and

WHEREAS, on February 24, 2008, Fidel Castro handed over the

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30 reins of the Cuban government to his brother, Raul Castro, who
31 was elected president by the National Assembly, and today,
32 Miguel Diaz-Canel, who succeeded Raul Castro as president in
33 2018, serves in that capacity and as secretary of the Central
34 Committee of the Cuban Communist Party, and

35 WHEREAS, on January 12, 2021, the United States Government
36 officially listed Cuba as a state sponsor of terrorism alongside
37 Iran, North Korea, and Syria, and

38 WHEREAS, the United States Secretary of State has
39 determined that Cuba repeatedly provided support for acts of
40 international terrorism, and

41 WHEREAS, on July 11, 2022, a series of protests against the
42 Cuban regime erupted on the island, marking the first time in 60
43 years that ordinary Cubans dared to publicly rise up against
44 their government over political oppression, including the
45 arrests of thousands who were never heard from again, food
46 shortages, rising prices of goods and commodities, lack of
47 access to medicines, and unreliable electricity, and

48 WHEREAS, Cubans all over the world joined their compatriots
49 in protests against the oppressive and tyrannical Cuban
50 government, shouting, ";Patria y vida!" appropriating Fidel
51 Castro's slogan of "Patria o muerte," made famous during his
52 takeover of Cuba, and

53 WHEREAS, on March 3, 2023, a group of Cuban officials, led
54 by Cuban Ambassador Lianys Torres Rivera, had a dinner meeting
55 with local business leaders, Tampa City Council member Guido
56 Maniscalco, Hillsborough County School Board member Karen Perez,
57 and Hillsborough County Clerk of Court and Comptroller Cindy
58 Stuart at an upscale Tampa restaurant, and

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59 WHEREAS, as word spread of the unprecedented meeting, a
60 protest erupted at the restaurant, with outraged protestors
61 confronting the ambassador and her delegation, shouting at them
62 and demanding to know why tens of thousands of Cubans are being
63 held as political prisoners by their own government in a brazen
64 violation of human rights laws, and

65 WHEREAS, it is unconscionable that local government
66 officials anywhere in this state or the United States would sit
67 down to an upscale dinner with Cuban government officials who
68 have betrayed their own people and who flout common decency and
69 hold democratic principles in contempt, and

70 WHEREAS, to say that these local government officials
71 demonstrated poor judgment is an understatement, given that this
72 state is home to the largest Cuban exile population of freedom
73 seekers in the United States, many of them residing in the Tampa
74 Bay area, and

75 WHEREAS, it is inexcusable that these officials would break
76 bread with members of an oppressive and tyrannical government
77 that routinely violates its citizens' human rights, does not
78 allow its citizens to have a voice in government, imprisons any
79 person that opposes the government, and routinely rations food,
80 and

81 WHEREAS, representatives from an oppressive and tyrannical
82 foreign government should not be entertained by local officials,
83 and these officials in particular should be called out by name
84 and condemned for their actions, NOW, THEREFORE,

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86 Be It Resolved by the Senate of the State of Florida:

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88 That the actions of Guido Maniscalco, Karen Perez, and
89 Cindy Stuart and all others involved in the March 3, 2023,
90 dinner meeting with Cuban Ambassador Lianys Torres Rivera and
91 her delegation, who represent an oppressive and tyrannical
92 government, are condemned.

93 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Florida Senate stands with
94 all Cubans residing in Florida who have escaped communism and
95 those still in Cuba who are searching for a means to escape
96 systemic oppression.

97 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Florida Senate stands with
98 the Cuban exile community to honor "¡Patria y vida!" and support
99 freedom for the oppressed.