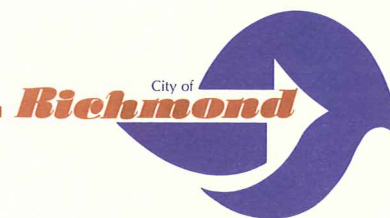


OFFICE OF MAYOR GAYLE MCLAUGHLIN

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10/27/09

**\*\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\*\***

**Contact:**

**Marilyn Langlois, Mayor's Office 510-932-1942**

**The Mayor of Richmond, CA condemns the US Treasury Department's prohibition of a Richmond delegation visiting its sister city in Regla, Cuba**

**Richmond, California** Richmond Mayor Gayle McLaughlin expressed her profound disappointment with the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), which is part of the Treasury Department under the Obama administration, for continuing to infringe on U.S. citizens' right to travel to Cuba.

*"It seems that the change that was also promised in the area of our freedom to travel is not forthcoming. The current administration continues to deny American citizens our right to visit the island of Cuba. Richmond requested a license for a small delegation of elected City officials, community members, and students to visit our sister-city in Regla, Cuba, and we were denied. This is a prohibition typical of the Bush administration, and we condemn it in the strongest terms on behalf of the 100,000 residents of our City,"* said McLaughlin.

The trip was to take place during the first weeks of November and had been planned for over a year by the Mayor and the Richmond-Regla Sister City Committee, a member of the US-Cuba Sister Cities Association active in citizen diplomacy. OFAC guidelines were followed in requesting the pertinent license to travel.

McLaughlin believes that the denial of this license, and the actual requirement to have such a license, makes no sense to most Americans and is part of a failed and unjust policy towards Cuba. U.S. residents are the only people in the industrialized world prohibited by their government from traveling freely to Cuba.

*"We are in the process of appealing this decision and will continue to strongly advocate for lifting the travel ban for all Americans who wish to travel to Cuba ."* added the Mayor.

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