

Bill to ease Cuban embargo is introduced

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WASHINGTON --

A group of lawmakers opposed to the U.S. policy on Cuba introduced a broad bill that would roll back some trade and travel restrictions against Havana.

Rep. Charles Rangel, a New York Democrat and chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee; Rep. Jo Ann Emerson, R-Mo.; and Sens. Max Baucus, D-Mont., and Mike Crapo, R-Idaho, told reporters on Thursday that the restrictions had not dislodged the Castro government in 50 years.

The bill would make it easier for U.S. firms to sell agricultural goods and medicines to Cuba. It would also eliminate restrictions on U.S. nationals traveling to the island.

Asked if the bill had any chance of passage, given that Congress rarely takes up Cuba-related bills, Rangel sounded an optimistic note. Bush's "credentials in foreign policy are not at an all-time high," he told reporters. He suggested "there's more and more people demanding reasons why we continue to support an ineffective embargo."

Rangel contended the number of supporters for similar legislation have increased "every year and every session. This bipartisan approach might be more effective than we have been in the past."