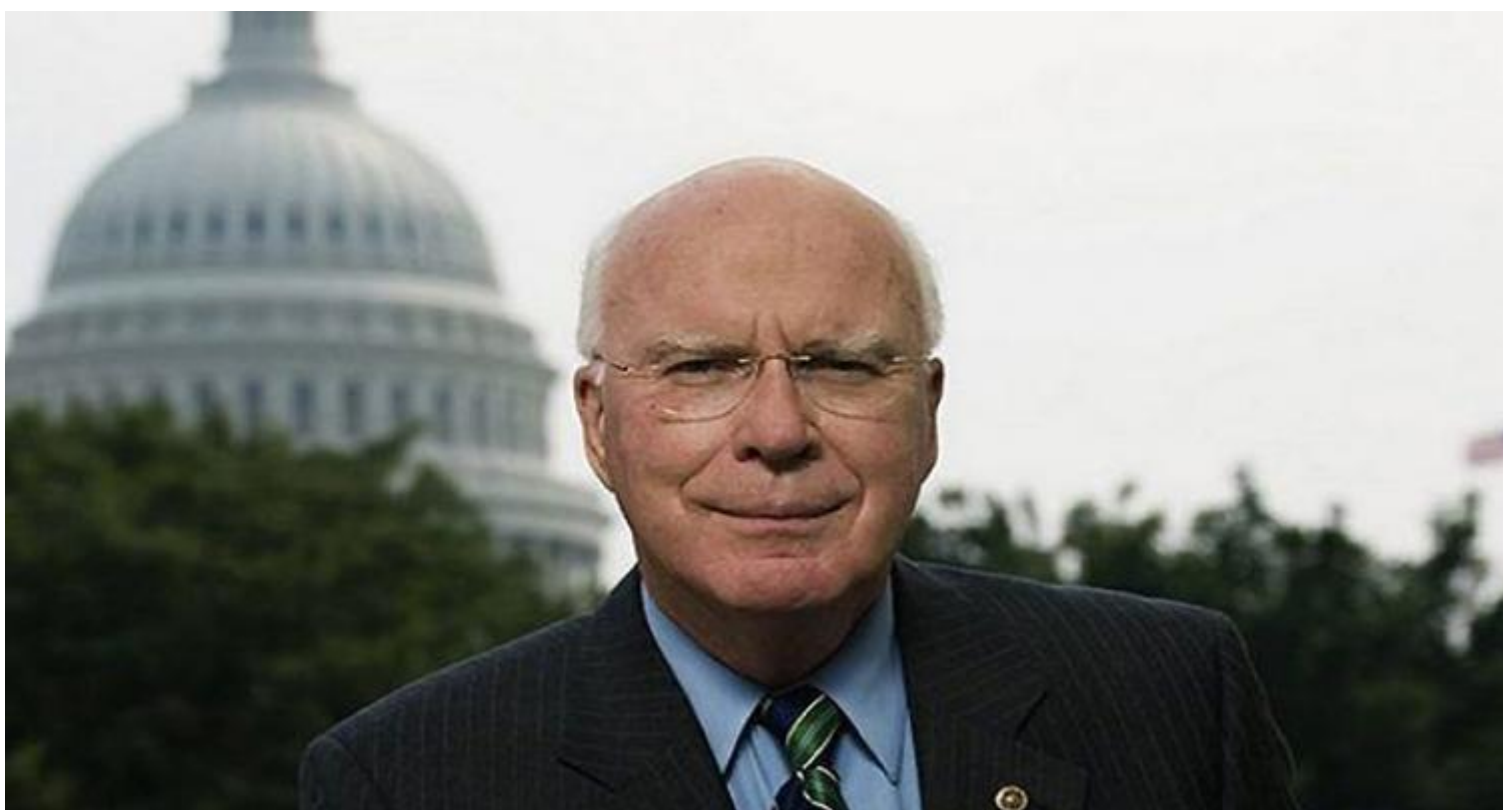


# *U.S. Senator Leahy criticizes Trump and stresses the importance of rapprochement between Havana and Washington*

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Washington, November 21 (RHC) U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy reiterated his criticism of the measures by the administration of Donald Trump against Cuba and stressed the importance of the rapprochement between the two countries.

“I have spoken about the need for rapprochement with Cuba many times. It is in our national interest because our past policy of unilateral sanctions and isolation, enforced for more than half a century, failed to achieve any of its objectives,” the Vermont Democrat lawmaker said in a statement released Wednesday, according to Prensa Latina.

Leahy said that since the beginning of Trump's presidency, the White House has issued constant executive orders to reverse the rapprochement initiated during the Barack Obama's administration (2009-2017), which have largely restricted Americans from traveling to the island.

“Cuba is the only country in the world to which Americans cannot travel freely, other than North Korea, because President Trump apparently believes it is his sole prerogative to tell Americans where they can

travel and spend their own money,” the senator said.

He added there are other nations with which Washington has profound disagreements, like Russia, China, Egypt or Turkey, 'but no one is proposing that we prevent Americans from traveling to those countries, and if they did Republicans and Democrats would strongly oppose it.

In his statement, which must be included in the Congressional Record, he mentioned that the U.S. Embassy in Havana, and that of the island in Washington are operating on a shoestring, and as a result, the ability of both governments to process visas and conduct diplomacy is at a virtual standstill

He recalled that Cubans seeking visas to come to the United States to participate in educational programs and cultural, entrepreneurial or scientific exchanges must go to a third nation to apply at US embassies, which greatly increases the cost of the process, and now that is worsened by the decision to reduce the majority of air and sea travel to the island.

Why don't we at least increase the number of consular officers at our embassies so Americans and Cubans can visit each other's countries? Senator Leahy asked.

According to Leahy, the cause of the illnesses suffered by U.S. Embassy personnel in Cuba has yet to be determined, which, she said, 'there is no evidence implicating the Cuban government despite kneejerk claims by some to the contrary. "

But he indicated that the last such incident occurred more than a year ago, 'and there are certainly U.S. Foreign Service officials who would welcome the opportunity to serve in Havana."

"Both governments should be working to create favorable conditions for re-staffing each other's consular services so they can better serve the people of our two countries," he said.

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<https://www.radiohc.cu/en/noticias/nacionales/208010-us-senator-leahy-criticizes-trump-and-stresses-the-importance-of-rapprochement-between-havana-and-washington>



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