

May 15, 2007

Senator Fred Thompson
American Enterprise Institute
110 Seventeenth Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Senator Thompson,

Given that it has been publicly reported in The Weekly Standard, a leading neo-conservative publication, that you support Fidel Castro and the Cuban regime by being a purveyor of fine Cuban exports despite the trade embargo, I was surprised to see your recent op ed in a more traditional conservative outlet, The National Review, regarding my trip to Cuba (I suspect you choose The National Review in an effort to pander to an outlet that had criticized you for your opposition to medical malpractice legislation).

In your May 2, 2007 National Review article, "Paradise Island," you specifically raised concerns about whether my trip to Cuba with 9/11 heroes, who have suffered serious health problems as a result of their exposure to toxic substances at Ground Zero that have gone untreated was somehow going to support Castro and the Cuban government:

"It always leaves me shaking my head when I read about some big-time actor or director going to Cuba and gushing all over Castro."

[<http://article.nationalreview.com/?q=OWNhNzA2YmY3NTNjZjZhNjE1NmZjMDFkOTdjN2Q4ZmE=>]

Putting aside the fact that you, like the Bush Administration, seem far more concerned about the trip to Cuba than the health care of these 9/11 heroes, I was struck by the fact that your concerns (including comments about Castro's reported financial worth) apparently do not extend to your own conduct, as reported in The Weekly Standard's April 23, 2007 story, "From the Courthouse to the White House Fred Thompson auditions for the leading role" (emphasis added):

"Thompson's work space looks just like what the home office of a successful politician or CEO should look like -- though a little messier: a large desk, dark wood, leather furniture, lots of books and magazines and newspapers, a flat-screen TV, and box upon box of cigars -- Montecristos from Havana."

[http://weeklystandard.com/Utilities/prINTER_preview.asp?idArticle=13528&R=1136E33842]

In light of your comments regarding Cuba and Castro, do you think the "box upon box of cigars -- Montecristos from Havana" that you have in your office have contributed to Castro's reported wealth?

While I will leave it up to the conservatives to debate your hypocrisy and the Treasury Department to determine whether the "box upon box of cigars" violates the trade embargo, I hereby challenge you to a health care debate.

Survey after survey has indicated that health care is one of the top issues to the American voters. Today, more than 46 million people lack health care coverage, including 9 million children. We pay significantly more than any other country in the world -- and get less back. Americans live

expectancy is lower than other Ground Zero 9/11 workers live in a society where the Bush Administration has shown more concern about their travel than about their health.

Our debate would provide you an opportunity to appeal to the right wing of the Republican Party by continuing to attack me; it would give me a chance to discuss health care and tell you exactly what happened in Cuba, given your apparent interests; and it would provide the American people an opportunity to see just how serious Hollywood can be, with a purported conservative and an avowed progressive Hollywood personality on stage.

Over the course of the debate, we could specifically address the following issues:

(1) Your work as a lobbyist in light of the fact that the health care and insurance industries have maintained the current health care system through their effective control of the political establishment.

(2) The fact that you raised hundred of thousands of dollars in campaign contributions from the health care and insurance industries.

(3) Discuss the fact, highlighted in yet another conservative outlet The New York Sun, that you inexplicably wanted to cut funding for AIDS research.
[<http://www.nysunpolitics.com/blog/2007/05/thompsons-1994-issue-positions.html>]

(4) Your relationship with the First family and by extension HCA, one of the nation's largest for-profit hospital chains. It has been reported that former Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (who was renowned for his over-the-television-screen Schiavo diagnosis) is serving as one of your confidantes on your potential presidential campaign. The Frist family has historically controlled HCA, which paid a record \$1.7 billion in civil and criminal fines, including a \$631 million penalty for Medicaid fraud -- in other words, ripping off the taxpayers.

(5) Discussing whether Arthur Branch, as the District Attorney of Manhattan, supports a woman's right to choose, gun safety reforms, gay marriage, the trans fat ban and anti-smoking laws (which would impact Cuban cigars, including your Montecristos).

Like American Idol, we could even have the country vote to determine which one of us wins the debate. Though in the spirit of full disclosure, I feel obligated to forewarn you that I was the winner of the 1971-72 Detroit Free Press Debate Award for the state of Michigan.

The winner of our health care debate could even light a Victory cigar with one of your Montecristos (though we may want to consider shopping them to the safe house where I have put a master copy of SiCKO in the event that the Bush Administration tries to seize the film).

Sincerely,

Michael Moore