

FORM LETTER ON PANAMA CANAL TREATY (FAVOR)

Dear _____ :

Thank you for your letter urging my support of a new treaty to clarify our position in the Panama Canal Zone.

While I certainly do not oppose renegotiation of our 1903 agreement with the Republic of Panama, as modified in 1936 and 1955, I do strongly object to any unilateral relinquishment of sovereignty or divestiture of property without Congressional authorization. In fact, I am a co-sponsor of a Senate Resolution which stipulates just that.

Understandably, there is a nationalistic movement in Panama to gain complete control of the vital canal territory. However, its participants, for the most part, overlook the fact that all present United States rights and titles were justly purchased by our Government -- at a net taxpayers' investment of \$6 billion -- and that the economic benefits derived from the efficient U. S. operation of the canal have contributed to Panama's status as the highest per capita income country in Central America.

Because of Panama's history of political instability, I am concerned that any major relaxation in our role with respect to the canal might not be consistent with either our own commercial interests or the security considerations of the entire Western Hemisphere. Nevertheless, I do believe it is possible and desirable to reach an accommodation which would meet the reasonable aspirations of the Panamanian people without demonstrably weakening U. S. posture in the area.

The important thing, in any event, is that this highly sensitive issue be resolved through the ratification process so that every aspect of the controversy may be discussed. I appreciate knowing of your personal views in that regard, and look forward to hearing from you further on the matter as action progresses towards development of a mutually acceptable policy.

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