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### SOVIET-AMERICAN FAMILIES—SOVIET VISITATION RESTRICTIONS

- Whereas millions of United States citizens, including members of national and ethnic groups such as Armenians, Byelorussians, Estonians, Germans, Jews, Latvians, Lithuanians, Poles, Russians, and Ukrainians, have relatives in the Soviet Union;
- Whereas the Soviet Union, as a signatory of the 1975 Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, commonly known as the Helsinki Accords, committed itself to "favourably consider applications for travel with the purpose of allowing persons to enter or leave their territory temporarily, and on a regular basis if desired, in order to visit members of their families.";
- Whereas in that same document the Soviet Union pledged that "applications for temporary visits to meet members of . . . families will be dealt with without distinction as to country of origin or destination . . . ; cases of urgent necessity—such as serious illness or death—will be given priority treatment.";
- Whereas the Soviet Union has ratified the United Nations Charter and signed other international human rights documents such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, documents which clearly protect the right to leave one's country and return thereto;
- Whereas in anticipation of the Geneva Summit Conference of November 1985, President Reagan stated, ". . . the cause of peace would be served if more individuals and families . . . could come to know each other in a personal way.";
- Whereas home visits would immeasurably aid our understanding of the Soviet people and improve relations with the Soviet Union, since family visitation is one of the most basic forms of cultural exchange;
- Whereas it is not proper for governments to decide which relationships constitute close family ties for the purpose of determining which relatives should be allowed to visit each other;
- Whereas the present policies of the Soviet Union make it virtually impossible for the millions of relatives in the two countries to exchange visits in their homes, and relatives who have used other forms of communication, such as mail, telephone, telegraph, and gift parcels have experienced enormous difficulties;
- Whereas because of restrictive Soviet policies, less than 1,000 of the many thousands of Americans who visited the Soviet Union in 1986 were allowed a private visa to stay with relatives in their homes; and only about 1,500 Soviet citizens were allowed to visit their relatives in the United States;
- Whereas many Americans who have been frustrated by delay or denial in obtaining private visas to visit family members in their homes in the Soviet Union have resorted to joining package tours to the Soviet Union as a means of seeing their family members;
- Whereas relatives should be able to comfort and assist each other in the event of medical emergencies such as those which resulted from the Chernobyl disaster, or when specialized medical treatment is not available in a particular country;
- Whereas in the case of serious illness or death the victim's relatives should be guaranteed expeditious determination of their visa applications;