



# CHANGE

## IN OUR INTEREST

TRAVEL, TRADE AND  
IMPROVED RELATIONS  
WITH

# CUBA



Dear Colleague:

As the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress continues its important work, we write today to provide you with information about U.S.-Cuba policy and to offer our resources and our best advice as Congress debates the policy and considers legislation during this congressional session.

U.S.-Cuba relations have been at a standstill for many years, but momentum for change is developing and already this year several significant changes have taken place.


President Obama has already fulfilled his campaign promise by removing restrictions on travel to Cuba by Cuban-Americans. Just before Secretary Clinton's trip to the OAS General Assembly in San Pedro Sula, President Obama proposed to resume migration talks which have been suspended since 2003, to which the Cuban government responded positively, adding that they wanted to also engage in talks on direct mail service. In a historic agreement at the OAS General Assembly, the United States joined other foreign ministers and agreed by consensus to end Cuba's suspension from the body, imposed in 1962 at the height of the Cold War. All these steps indicate that the administration is open to further changes in U.S. policy.

Important groups that cut across the political spectrum – including Cuban-Americans, advocates for human rights, the U.S. business and agriculture community, leading religious denominations, security and military specialists among others – all support significant changes in the policy as well.

Public opinion research conducted this year has also documented a growing majority in favor of changing U.S. policy toward Cuba in the Cuban-American community itself. According to a recent poll conducted by Bendixen & Associates in April, two-thirds (67%) of Cuban and Cuban-American adults support the lifting of travel restrictions for *all* Americans so that they can also travel to Cuba freely; this is a remarkable shift, up 18 percentage points from the same survey conducted in 2006. Broader American sentiment has also changed according to a recent Ipsos poll taken April 23-27 which found that 67% of all Americans want the right to travel to Cuba, and 72% of respondents said it would have a positive impact on the island.

Internationally, pressures to change our Cuba policy are growing. In this hemisphere, all of Latin America's elected leaders, most notably Brazil's president Luiz Inácio "Lula" da Silva and Mexico's president Felipe Calderón, have urged the United States to change its Cuba policy. At a December 2008 summit in Rio De Janeiro, the leaders of every Latin American country called on the U.S. to end the embargo against Cuba.

In Cuba itself, processes of change are underway. Fidel Castro is ailing. His successor and Cuba's current president, Raul Castro, has begun some modest economic reforms, and has called for direct negotiations with the Obama administration. These steps are small, but they



are taking place in the context of a growing desire on the part of Cubans (on the island and abroad) for greater economic opportunities and political openings.

The information included in this packet shows how existing restrictions on travel and trade harm U.S. national interests and why reforming this policy is consistent with our values, our economic interests, and efforts to improve the U.S. image abroad.

We believe that in order for the United States to play a constructive role as Cubans determine their future, we need to engage with the people of Cuba and the Cuban government, in a variety of ways. These might include the pursuit of bilateral talks on other issues of mutual concern, unfettered agricultural trade, expanded academic exchange, greater contact between faith communities, and unrestricted travel for all Americans.

We hope the material included in this packet will be useful to you, and we are available as a resource to you for any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

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## U.S. – CUBA POLICY IN THE 111th CONGRESS

- **H.R. 874, ending the ban on travel to Cuba, has been introduced in the House by Congressmen Delahunt and Flake.**
- **S. 428, ending the ban on travel to Cuba, has been introduced in the Senate by Senators Dorgan, Dodd, Enzi and Lugar.**

### The Cuba travel ban: a background

- Most U.S. citizens are legally prohibited from traveling to Cuba. Restrictions on travel by Americans to Cuba are based on legislation granting the President statutory authority to regulate spending by persons subject to U.S. jurisdiction in a foreign country during a national emergency or time of war. **Cuba is the only country in the world to which the United States government bans travel by its citizens.**
- For decades, the ban on legal travel by Americans to Cuba was imposed through Executive Orders and regulations, rather than by statute. Presidents have exercised their authority in different ways:
  - In 1977, President Carter chose to eliminate all travel restrictions for all Americans.
  - In 1982, President Reagan re-imposed the ban.
  - In the 1990s, President Clinton did not lift the travel ban, but permitted licensed people-to-people contacts with Cuba, and encouraged travel by academics, agriculture organizations, businesses, journalists, religious groups, athletes and performers, and Cuban Americans, among others.
- In 2000, when Congress passed legislation permitting the sale of agricultural goods to Cuba, embargo proponents attached legislative restrictions on U.S travel to Cuba. All tourist travel was prohibited, and the President's authority to allow certain categories of non-tourist travel was limited.
- Today, the President can loosen or tighten travel rules for twelve specific categories of travelers (such as researchers, religious workers, government officials, etc.). But it would take an Act of Congress to restore full travel rights to all Americans.
- In its first term, the Bush administration issued guidelines and regulations restricting or eliminating travel under many of the twelve categories. For example, travel by academic institutions, non-profit research institutions and national religious organizations were severely restricted. In 2004, the Administration put new, more onerous restrictions on Cuban Americans, limiting their right to travel to Cuba to once every three years and narrowing the categories of family members whom they may visit.

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- Under the current rules, there is very little travel between Cuba and the United States. Most individuals who qualify under one of the twelve categories must apply for an individual travel license, a lengthy and uncertain bureaucratic application process through the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control.
  - Legislation to end the ban on travel to Cuba has been offered in both the House and the Senate in each of the last several Congresses. Efforts to cut off funding for enforcement of the travel ban were approved in the House in 2001, 2002, and 2003, and in the Senate in 2003, but were stripped in conference committee. In 2003, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee marked up and passed S.950, the Freedom to Travel to Cuba Act, but it did not receive consideration on the Senate floor.
  - In April 2009, President Obama fulfilled his campaign promise and removed restrictions on travel to Cuba by Cuban-Americans. All signs indicate his administration is open to further changes in the policy.

*Prepared by the Center for Democracy in the Americas, [www.democracyinamericas.org](http://www.democracyinamericas.org), the Latin America Working Group, [www.lawg.org](http://www.lawg.org), the Lexington Institute, [www.lexingtoninstitute.org](http://www.lexingtoninstitute.org), the New America Foundation, [www.newamerica.net](http://www.newamerica.net), and Washington Office on Latin America, [www.wola.org](http://www.wola.org)*



## LIFTING THE TRAVEL BAN WILL STRENGTHEN U.S. INTERESTS AND HELP THE CUBAN PEOPLE

For fifty years, U.S. policy toward Cuba – diplomatic isolation and economic sanctions – has failed to advance our goals for human and political rights on the island while also harming the U.S. national interest.


That is why retired U.S. military leaders, respected human rights advocates, former political prisoners and dissidents on the island, and growing majorities of Americans and Cuban-Americans want *all* U.S. citizens to have the right to travel to Cuba as part of a new policy based on engagement with the Cuban people.

### **1. Retired senior officers of the U.S. armed forces affirm that Cuba is not a security threat, that the current embargo in fact strengthens the Cuban government, and that allowing the freedom to travel to Cuba offers real benefits to the Cuban people.**

- In a letter to President Obama, twelve high-ranking retired military officers said that “Cuba ceased to be a military threat decades ago... (but) the current embargo serves more to prop up the Castro regime.” Advocating for the freedom to travel, these esteemed military leaders said “By sending our best ambassadors – the American people – to engage their Cuban neighbors, we have a much better chance of influencing the eventual course of Cuban affairs” and promoting a more pluralistic and open society. – *Letter from retired military officers to President Obama, April 13, 2009.*
- General James T. Hill, a U.S. Army Retired Four Star General, and former Combatant Commander of U.S. Southern Command, has argued that engagement with Cuba would provide the island with an important alternative to Venezuelan and Russian influence. He has also written “Our national policy toward Cuba, to encourage democracy and the overthrow of Fidel’s communist government through sanctions, has failed miserably.” – “*9 Ways for US to talk to Cuba and for Cuba to talk to US,*” *The Center for Democracy in the Americas, 2009.*
- The strategy of starving the Cuban government by restricting U.S. travel is ineffective since Cuba is steadily building beneficial economic and diplomatic relationships with other countries throughout the world such as Venezuela, Brazil, China, Russia, among others.

### **2. Enforcement of the ban against travel to Cuba wastes U.S. tax dollars and diverts them from real threats, which compromises the security of all Americans.**

- In a 2008 report, the GAO found that after 2001, OFAC opened more investigations and imposed more penalties for embargo violations, such as buying Cuban cigars, than for violations of other sanctions, such as those on Iran.

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- The GAO also found that the Treasury Department's disproportionate focus on enforcement of the rules against travel and trade with Cuba "have strained C.B.P.'s [Customs and Border Protection, Department of Homeland Security] capacity to carry out its primary mission of keeping terrorists, criminals and inadmissible aliens from entering the country."

### **3. Ending the travel ban would be good for the U.S. economy; it would expand demand for U.S. products, help the tourist travel and airline industries, and create much-needed American jobs.**

- **U.S. economic output would increase by between \$1.18 billion and \$1.61 billion a year and create 16,888 to 23,020 new jobs** if current restrictions on travel to Cuba were lifted, according to an independent study conducted in 2002 by the Brattle Group, a respected economic forecasting firm.
- According to the Brattle Group report, increased demand for air travel alone would generate significant economic activity due to the corresponding increase in demand for inputs to airline service and the ripple effect on consumer spending. Applying a multiplier estimate of 2.6 to capture these "indirect" and "induced" spending effects, the total impact would range from \$650 million to \$1.08 billion a year in additional U.S. output and the creation of 9,285 to 15,417 new jobs.

### **4. A majority of Americans and Cuban Americans support unrestricted travel to Cuba for all.**

- A recent Ipsos poll taken April 23-27 finds that **67% of all Americans want the right to travel to Cuba**, and 72% of respondents said it would have a positive impact on the island.
- According to a Bendixen and Associates poll taken April 14-16 this year, **two-thirds (67%) of Cuban and Cuban-American adults support the lifting of travel restrictions for all Americans** so that they can also travel to Cuba freely.

### **5. Prominent U.S. human rights organizations have called for an end to the travel ban concluding that it does nothing to improve the human rights situation on the island.**

- "...this policy [the U.S. ban on travel to Cuba] has proved completely ineffective when it comes to pressuring the Cuban government to dismantle its repressive machinery. The Freedom to Travel to Cuba Act is a necessary first step in replacing an ineffective, unilateral policy toward Cuba with a more targeted, multilateral approach." - *José Miguel Vivanco, Americas Director, Human Rights Watch, 2009.*

- “It is well past time to reassess a policy that impedes the ability of American citizens to freely interact with Cubans on a large scale and thus expose them to unfettered information about the outside world. We call on the incoming administration of Barack Obama to reexamine the embargo and to immediately lift the restrictions on remittances and travel to and from the island.” – *Jennifer Windsor, Executive Director of Freedom House.*
- “Improving the lives of the Cuban people and encouraging democracy and human rights in Cuba will best be advanced through more, rather than less, contact between the Cuban and American people.” - *Most Reverend Howard J. Hubbard, Bishop of Albany, Chairman Committee on International Justice and Peace, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, endorsing The Freedom to Travel to Cuba Act.*


**6. Political dissidents in Cuba want engagement with the U.S. and the freedom to travel for American citizens. They prefer the U.S. approach toward the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe during the Cold War, supported by Presidents of both parties, to encourage unrestricted travel so that we could share our ideas, values and culture.**

- Dissidents and former political prisoners in Cuba recognize this fact and have repeatedly urged the United States to lift restrictions on Americans’ travel to Cuba, and especially for an end to restrictions on family travel:

“We fully support lifting all restrictions on Americans to travel to Cuba. It would contribute to better knowing and understanding the realities in our countries. Even by a simple conversation, sharing everyday experiences, Americans would be demonstrating how your society is capable of constantly deepening and improving democracy, and could help our own efforts for democracy.” - *Miriam Leiva, Independent Journalist and Human Rights Activist; Oscar Espinosa Chepe, prisoner of conscience, sentenced to 20 years on March 2003, on conditional release due to serious health problems, April 2009.*

"I would love to think that this is the year that the embargo ends. The United States government has to reframe its policy towards Cuba, which has not worked for all these years. Trapped in the middle of the rivalry between governments are the Cuban people and I wish that we were the center of priorities for our government and for the United States." *Yoani Sánchez, a Cuban philologist and blogger who is under permanent surveillance by Cuban government officers, April 23, 2008*

"Lifting the embargo won't solve the problems of the Cuban people. Maintaining it is no solution, either." - *Oswaldo Payá, Cuban dissident and leader of the Christian Liberation Movement, Miami Herald, August 2000.*



## 7. Travel restrictions are inconsistent with U.S. policy on citizen travel to other countries.

- U.S. citizens, barred from traveling freely to Cuba, are allowed to travel to other communist nations, including North Korea, China, and Vietnam. With the recent end to the ban on travel to Libya, Cuba is the only country in the world to which U.S. citizens cannot travel without special government permission.

## 8. Allowing Americans to travel to Cuba will send an important signal to Latin America as a whole. Currently every nation in the hemisphere - except the U.S. - has full diplomatic relations with Havana. An end to the travel ban would signal a shift in the U.S. approach to Cuba and demonstrate to our democratic allies in the region that we are respecting their concerns while continuing to adhere to our goals for opening political space in Cuba.

- Most other governments have normal diplomatic relations with Cuba, engage with Cuba in other multi-lateral bodies, address concerns about human rights in the context of ongoing dialogue, and place no limitations on the right of their citizens to travel to Cuba.
- At a December 2008 summit in Rio De Janeiro, **the leaders of every Latin American country called on the U.S. to end the embargo against Cuba.** An end to the ban on travel would be a modest step that would respond to the calls of our friends in the hemisphere.
- In an historic agreement at the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) in San Pedro Sula, Honduras on June 2, 2009, foreign ministers agreed by consensus to end Cuba's suspension from the body, imposed in 1962 at the height of the Cold War. After rounds of tough negotiations, the U.S. agreed to the language, showing flexibility and a willingness to listen to regional partners. The final statement set no preconditions, but rather ended the suspension on Cuba and proposed a mechanism for discussion with Cuba if it requests re-admission.

*Prepared by the Center for Democracy in the Americas, [www.democracyinamericas.org](http://www.democracyinamericas.org), the Latin America Working Group, [www.lawg.org](http://www.lawg.org), the Lexington Institute, [www.lexingtoninstitute.org](http://www.lexingtoninstitute.org), the New America Foundation, [www.newamerica.net](http://www.newamerica.net), and Washington Office on Latin America, [www.wola.org](http://www.wola.org)*



## U.S.-CUBA TRADE: ENDING RESTRICTIONS WILL PROMOTE OUR ECONOMY AND REFLECT U.S. INTERESTS AND VALUES

### 1. What is the current status of U.S. agricultural sales to Cuba?

- In 2000, the U.S. Congress passed the Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act (TSRA), which authorized the export of U.S. agricultural commodities to Cuba. Signed by President Clinton in October 2000, the first shipment of U.S. goods arrived in Cuba in December 2001. Despite regulatory and bureaucratic impediments, the total value of purchases from Cuba reached \$536 million in 2008.
- U.S. sales to Cuba could be significantly higher. The United States – because of our location and the quality of our products – is Cuba’s natural supplier, but our regulatory and statutory restrictions cause Cuba to take much of its business to U.S. competitors such as Canada, China, Vietnam, Europe, and Brazil.
- Cuba’s need for imported agricultural goods is likely to increase in the near term, because the island’s domestic food production capabilities were ravaged by three major hurricanes in the summer of 2008 that resulted in \$9 billion worth of damage to crops, infrastructure, industry and investments.


### 2. Who is currently selling to Cuba and what are they selling?

- **Wheat, rice, corn, animal feed, and soybeans are the top five commodities sold to Cuba in terms of total sales.** Cuba is America’s twelfth largest market for wheat, the eighth largest market for chicken, and the **third largest market for rice.**
- 168 U.S. companies in 35 states have sold goods to Cuba. Twenty-three U.S. ports have participated in export shipments to Cuba.

### 3. What kinds of restrictions apply to the sale of U.S. agricultural goods to Cuba?

- **Although agricultural sales were legalized by Congress, restrictions do remain, including cumbersome regulations and licensing restrictions imposed by the executive branch limit current sales, and increase the transaction costs of sales to Cuba.**

**What can be sold:** Approximately 300 different types of products are sold to Cuba. Traditional agriculture products authorized under TSRA include: wheat, corn, rice, soybeans, frozen poultry, and live cattle.



Under TSRA, the term “agricultural commodities” also includes products such as wooden picture frames, cigarettes, wallpaper base, organic and non-organic fertilizers, lumber, paper, dietary supplements, pet food, and many others. *(TSRA defines agricultural commodities by reference to Section 102 of the Agricultural Trade Act of 1978 (7 U.S.C. §5602).*

**Restrictive cash sales requirements:** TSRA requires that sales to Cuba be done either by cash in advance or through a third-country letter of credit. TSRA prohibits the use of U.S. private or government credit for these sales. The Cuban assets control regulations also prohibit, unless licensed by the Treasury Department, direct payments from Cuban banks to U.S. banks. In February 2005, the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) of the Department of the Treasury announced a stricter interpretation of the cash in advance payment method with respect to Cuba: requiring cash payments be made to the U.S. seller before goods leave a U.S. port for Cuba, rather than after shipment and before transfer of title and control of the goods. **The U.S. government does not impose cash in advance payment requirements on international trade deals with any other country in the world.**


Provisions contained within the 2009 Omnibus Appropriations Act prohibit OFAC from enforcing the more narrow 2005 interpretation of the term “cash in advance”. This is consistent with findings of the Congressional Research Service (CRS) in a March 2005 legal analysis of the term “**payment of cash in advance**”.

In the March 2005 memo, CRS found “a reviewing court could find OFAC’s interpretation to be unreasonable in light of the fact that it appears possible to structure international trade transactions in such a way that cash payments are received by the exporter after the goods have been shipped without violating either the statutory requirements or the legislative intent of TSREEA.”

- **These regulatory measures, more restrictive than what Congress envisioned, reduce U.S. sales, raise the transactional costs of U.S. exports to Cuba, and subject banks across the world to regulatory threats.**

**Licensing requirements:** In the 2009 Omnibus Appropriations Act contained a provision that allows travel by businesspersons for the purposes of “marketing and sale” of agricultural and medical goods under a general license. This allows qualified travelers to travel to Cuba without seeking specific prior authorization, as was previously required.

American farmers and businessmen must still request Commerce Department licenses for each of the products they want to sell to Cuba and apply for a license for each of the goods they want to ship to Cuba.



#### 4. What do these restrictions mean for the future of U.S. agricultural sales to Cuba?

- Due to the cumbersome restrictions on U.S. exports, Cuba's national import agency, ALIMPORT, lacks confidence in the reliability of the U.S. as a supplier, limiting the growth potential of U.S. sales.
- Today, U.S. exporters are unlikely to increase their market share in Cuba as long as current regulations remain in effect.

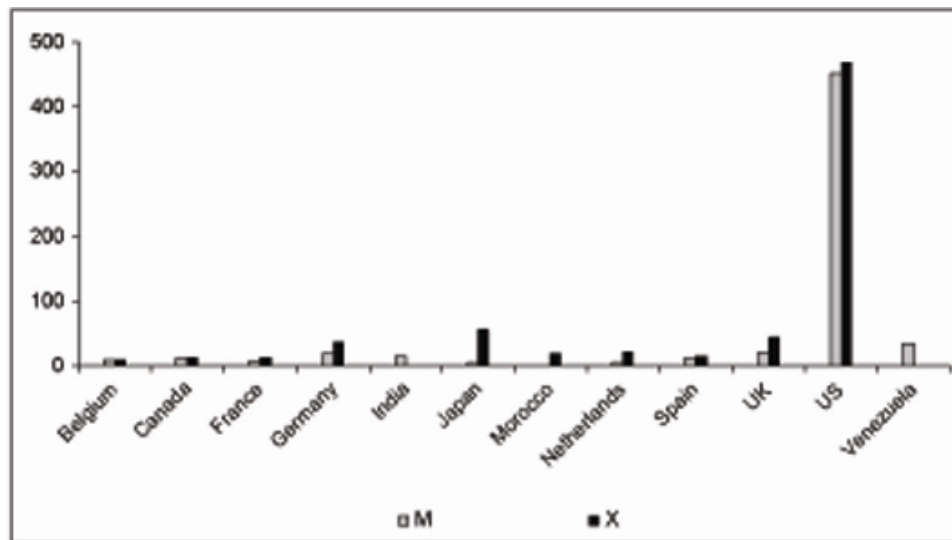
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## TRAVEL TO CUBA HELPS U.S. FARMERS AND AGRICULTURAL BUSINESS IN OUR NATIONAL INTERESTS

**1. Cuba and the United States are perfect partners for trade, but United States policy severely undermines the capacity of U.S. food and agricultural producers to travel to Cuba to close business deals that would expand sales.**

- As illustrated below, the United States held a dominant position in trade with Cuba before the embargo; if restrictions on travel to Cuba were removed, the United States could potentially regain this position.


**Cuba's Pre-Embargo Trade Partners in 1957, *International Historical Statistics***  
*Imports vs. Exports*



- With an agriculture sector long depleted by structural problems, resource scarcity, and massively destructive hurricanes in recent years, Cuba is incapable of producing enough food to feed itself. As a result, Cuba relies on trade partners near and far – but mostly far – to provide the bulk of their food needs.
- U.S. farmers and businesses are uniquely positioned to sell agricultural goods to Cuba due to comparatively low shipping costs and short transit times as compared with Cuba's 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> largest agricultural goods suppliers, Brazil and Europe.

**2. Despite restrictions, American businesses have shown their potential in Cuba.**


- Since reentering the Cuban market in 2001, the United States has come to dominate it. In 2000, when the U.S. Government still barred trade with Cuba, U.S. farmers sold virtually nothing there; by 2004, changes in sanctions law allowed U.S. farmers to provide 42 percent of all the food Cuba purchased abroad.

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- Cuba is the United States' third largest market for rice, eighth largest market for chicken and twelfth largest market for wheat. Today, 168 U.S. companies in 35 states are selling goods to Cuba. Twenty-three U.S. ports have participated in export shipments to Cuba.

### **3. U.S. citizens traveling to Cuba would significantly bolster sales of U.S. agricultural goods to Cuba.**

- If restrictions on trade and travel to Cuba were lifted, the annual U.S. share of Cuba's total agricultural imports would nearly double to as much as 64%, from the current 38%, an increase of up to \$483 million in sales to Cuba, according to 2008 figures from the U.S. International Trade Commission (USITC).
- According to the USITC, U.S. sales to Cuba could reach \$1 billion, or nearly a two-thirds share of the market – but only with a substantial increase in the numbers of tourists traveling to the island. The Commission indicates that removing financial and travel restrictions on Cuba would result in at least a 300 percent increase in American visitors to the island – such a jump could result in as many as a million U.S. visitors per year.
- This increase in American tourism to Cuba would vastly increase U.S. agricultural sales to Cuba, for example:
  - driving up general demand for a variety of staples such as wheat, poultry and eggs.
  - increasing demand for brands of processed food such as soft drinks and snacks that are familiar to American tourists, as well as luxury items like California wine, Pacific wild salmon and Florida Black Angus beef.
- If restrictions on travel and trade were removed, sales of 15 of the top 16 U.S. commodities exported to Cuba would increase.
  - According to projections by the U.S. International Trade Commission. Sales of wheat would increase (\$17 million to \$34 million); rice (\$14 million to \$44 million); fresh potatoes, fruits, and vegetables (a rise of \$37 million to \$68 million annually); processed foods (\$26 million to \$41 million); milk powder (\$15 million to \$42 million); dry beans (\$9 million to \$22 million); and poultry, beef, and pork each increasing by about \$9 million to \$13 million). (USITC, 4-4)
- In these difficult economic times, it is in our best interest to allow greater trade opportunities, such as in Cuba, for American businesses to sell their goods abroad.

### **4. U.S. business and agriculture constituencies have identified travel to Cuba for all Americans as an important priority in 2009.**

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- The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the American Farm Bureau Association, the U.S. Rice Producers Association, U.S. Wheat Associates and the National Foreign Trade Council, among others, have called on President Obama to allow all Americans to travel to Cuba without restriction.

**5. In addition to helping to create the substantial market Cuba should provide American farmers, travel to Cuba by U.S. citizens helps in creating the kind of dialogue and social interchange that Cuba hasn't seen in decades.**

- People-to-people exchange between Americans and Cubans promotes understanding, transmits ideas, and generates debate. As Cuba's people and government contemplate their future, unrestricted American travel to Cuba will help position our people, our values, and our businesses, and enhance our influence.

*Prepared by the Center for Democracy in the Americas, [www.democracyinamericas.org](http://www.democracyinamericas.org), the Latin America Working Group, [www.lawg.org](http://www.lawg.org), the Lexington Institute, [www.lexingtoninstitute.org](http://www.lexingtoninstitute.org), the New America Foundation, [www.newamerica.net](http://www.newamerica.net), and Washington Office on Latin America, [www.wola.org](http://www.wola.org)*



**U.S. ORGANIZATIONS THAT HAVE STATED THEIR SUPPORT FOR AN END  
TO THE BAN ON TRAVEL TO CUBA FOR ALL AMERICANS**

**CUBAN-AMERICAN**

Cuban American Alliance Education Fund  
Delvis Fernández Levy, President

Cuban Committee for Democracy  
Marlene Arzola, President

Cuba Study Group  
Carlos Saladrigas, Co-Chairman

Emergency Network of Cuban-American Scholars (ENCASA)

Puentes Cubanos  
Silvia Wilhelm, Executive Director

FORNORM  
Antonio Zamora

**AGRICULTURE**

American Farm Bureau Federation

American Meat Institute

American Soybean Association

National Association of Wheat Growers

National Barley Growers Association

National Chicken Council

National Corn Growers Association

National Council of Farmer Cooperatives

National Milk Producers Federation



National Oilseed Processors Association  
National Sorghum Producers  
National Turkey Federation  
North American Export Grain Association  
North American Millers Association  
Northarvest Bean Growers Association  
USA Dry Pea and Lentil Council  
USA Rice Federation  
U.S. Dairy Export Council  
U.S. Grains Council  
US Rice Producers Association  
U.S. Wheat Associates

**BUSINESS**

American Society of Travel Agents  
Business Roundtable  
Coalition for Employment through Exports  
Emergency Committee for American Trade  
Grocery Manufacturers Association  
National Foreign Trade Council  
National Retail Federation  
National Tour Association (NTA)  
Orbitz



Organization for International Investment

Port of Corpus Christi

U.S. Chamber of Commerce

U.S. Council for International Relations

USA\*Engage

**RELIGIOUS**

African Methodist Episcopal Church

Alliance of Baptists

American Baptist Churches of the USA

American Baptist Churches International Ministries

American Friends Service Committee

Church World Service

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM)

Church of the Brethren Witness

The Episcopal Church

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Jesuit Conference

Lutheran World Relief

Mennonite Central Committee

National Council of Churches of Christ USA

Presbyterian Church (USA)



Progressive National Baptist Convention

Reformed Church in America

Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

United Church of Christ

United Methodist Church

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

### **ACADEMIC**

American Association of State Colleges and Universities

NAFSA: Association of International Educators

Latin American Studies Association

Social Science Research Council

### **HUMAN RIGHTS/POLICY**

ActionAid USA

American Friends Service Committee

Center for Democracy in the Americas

Center for International Policy

Freedom House

Fund for Reconciliation and Development

Human Rights Watch

Institute for Policy Studies

Labor Council for Latin American Advancement



Latin America Working Group

National Alliance of Latin American & Caribbean Communities (NALACC)

New America Foundation

Operation USA

Oxfam America

TransAfrica Forum

Washington Office on Latin America

**CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS**

U.S.-Cuba Cultural Exchange

*Copies of organizational statements or letters are available from the Latin America Working Group, [www.lawg.org](http://www.lawg.org), or the Washington Office on Latin America, [www.wola.org](http://www.wola.org)*

## GROWING NUMBERS OF AMERICANS – ESPECIALLY CUBAN AMERICANS – WANT THE FREEDOM TO TRAVEL FOR ALL AMERICANS

Orbitz.com-Ipsos Poll: Conducted April 23-27 – Nationwide<sup>1</sup>

- 67% of Americans would support a policy that allows all Americans to travel to Cuba.
- 72% agree that expanding travel and tourism from the U.S. to Cuba would have a positive impact on the day-to-day lives of the Cuban people.
- 32% of Americans strongly support such a policy that would allow all Americans to travel to Cuba.
- 23% say that they would oppose lifting these restrictions for Americans traveling to Cuba (only 13% would strongly oppose it).

Washington Post / ABC News poll: Conducted April 21 – 24 – Nationwide<sup>2</sup>

Q: Do you think the U.S. Government should or should not end its travel restrictions, and allow U.S. citizens to visit Cuba and Cubans to visit the United States?

**Should – 55%**

Should not – 40%

No Opinion – 5%

Gallup poll: Conducted April 20-21, 2009 - Nationwide<sup>3</sup>

Q: Apart from their diplomatic relations, do you favor or oppose the United States government ending its restrictions on Americans traveling to Cuba?

**Favor lifting travel ban – 64%**

Oppose lifting travel ban – 27%

No opinion – 9%

	% Favor	% Oppose
Ending travel restrictions		
Republicans	57	36
Independents	60	29
Democrats	74	19

<sup>1</sup><http://www.ipsos-na.com/news/pressrelease.cfm?id=4386>

<sup>2</sup><http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/graphic/2009/04/27/GR2009042700688.html?sid=ST2009042700689>

<sup>3</sup><http://www.gallup.com/poll/1630/Cuba.aspx>

<sup>4</sup><http://www.gallup.com/poll/117829/Americans-Steady-Backing-Friendlier-Cuba-Relations.aspx>

Bendixen poll: Conducted April 14-16, 2009 – Cuban-Americans only <sup>5</sup>

Q: Do you favor or oppose all American citizens being able to travel to Cuba?

<u>2009</u>	<u>2006</u>
<b>67% favor</b>	49% favor
29% oppose	45% oppose

CNN / Opinion Research poll: Conducted April 3-5, 2009 – Nationwide <sup>6</sup>

- 64 percent thought the U.S. government should allow citizens to travel to Cuba.
- 71 percent of those polled said that the U.S. should reestablish diplomatic relations with Cuba, while 27 percent opposed such a move.

World Public Opinion (WPO) poll: Conducted March 25 – April 6, 2009 – Nationwide <sup>7</sup>

Q: Do you think, in general, American's:

Should be free to visit Cuba.....	70%
Republicans.....	62
Democrats.....	77
Independents.....	66

Should continue to be prohibited from visiting Cuba.....	28%
Republicans.....	37
Democrats.....	20
Independents.....	32
Refused/Don't know.....	2

Q: If there is increasing travel and trade between Cuba and the United States, do you think it is more likely that:

This will strengthen the communist regime in Cuba.....	26%
Republicans.....	38
Democrats.....	16
Independents.....	28

<sup>5</sup>[http://www.bendixenandassociates.com/studies/National\\_Survey\\_of\\_Cuban\\_Americans\\_on\\_Policy\\_towards\\_Cuba\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.bendixenandassociates.com/studies/National_Survey_of_Cuban_Americans_on_Policy_towards_Cuba_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>6</sup><http://www.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/04/10/poll.cuba/>

<sup>7</sup>[http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/apr09/Cuba\\_Apr09\\_quaire.pdf](http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/apr09/Cuba_Apr09_quaire.pdf)



This will lead Cuba in a more open and democratic direction.....	71%
Republicans.....	59
Democrats.....	80
Independents.....	69
Refused/Don't know.....	3

Zogby / ABC News poll: Conducted Sept. 23-25, 2008 – Nationwide<sup>8</sup>

- 68% believe all U.S. citizens should be allowed to travel to Cuba

Zogby Interactive poll: Conducted July 2007 – Nationwide<sup>9</sup>

- 56% of Americans said the U.S. should remove travel restrictions and end the embargo on trade to Cuba

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<sup>8</sup><http://www.thedialogue.org/page.cfm?pageID=403>

<sup>9</sup><http://www.thedialogue.org/page.cfm?pageID=403>



## U.S.-CUBA POLICY CONTACTS

### **The Center for Democracy in the Americas**

[www.democracyinamericas.org](http://www.democracyinamericas.org)

The Center for Democracy in the Americas (CDA) is devoted to changing U.S. policy toward the countries of the Americas by basing our relations on mutual respect, recognizing positive models of governance in the region, and fostering dialogue particularly with those governments and movements with which U.S. policy is at odds.

Its Cuba program is called the Freedom to Travel Campaign. Started in 2001, it seeks a fundamental overhaul of U.S. policy toward Cuba and an end to the U.S. travel ban. To achieve these objectives, it leads fact-finding missions for U.S. delegations, works with U.S. policymakers on strategy, sponsors and disseminates research, hosts events, and conducts public education and outreach via the news media and the internet.

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### **Latin America Working Group**

[www.lawg.org](http://www.lawg.org)

The Latin America Working Group is one of the nation's longest-standing coalitions dedicated to helping shape foreign policy toward Latin America and the Caribbean. LAWG carries out the coalition's mission to encourage U.S. policies towards Latin America that promote human rights, justice, peace and sustainable development. As a coalition, LAWG represents the interests of over 65 major religious, humanitarian, human rights, grassroots, and foreign policy organizations, providing reliable guidance to policymakers who want their decisions to be grounded in human rights. The LAWG regularly provides information to members of Congress, the media, and citizens interested in U.S. policy toward Latin America

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### **Lexington Institute**

[www.lexingtoninstitute.org](http://www.lexingtoninstitute.org)

The Lexington Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan public policy research organization that supports a strong national security posture, American engagement abroad, openness toward trade and immigration, and use of markets and economic freedom in addressing public policy challenges. Since 1999, its Cuba project has supported a shift toward a policy of engagement with Cuba, based on the idea that citizen contact and active diplomacy will be conducive to an opening in Cuba, will produce humanitarian benefits for Cubans, and will create a more productive government-to-government relationship. Lexington produces original field research on economic and political conditions in Cuba and critical analysis of U.S. policy; engages actively in the public debate through the press, publications, and our blog, The Cuban Triangle; and collaborates with Members of Congress who seek to change Cuba policy.



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**New America Foundation**  
[www.newamerica.net](http://www.newamerica.net)

The New America Foundation is a nonprofit, nonpartisan public policy institute that invests in new thinkers and new ideas to address the next generation of challenges facing the United States. The objective of New America's U.S. Cuba Policy Initiative is to take advantage of recent developments in Cuba and the United States to redirect U.S.-Cuba policy and relations towards a more sensible, mutually beneficial direction built on a new consensus of national stakeholders around an engagement strategy with Cuba—rather than the decades-old, tried-and-failed strategy of isolating Cuba and its citizens. The overall strategy of the U.S.-Cuba Policy Initiative is to build the intellectual capital, the policy prescriptions, and a mobilized and ideologically diverse network of policy stakeholders to push past a “tipping point” in U.S.-Cuba policy

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(202) 596-3430

**Washington Office on Latin America**  
[www.wola.org](http://www.wola.org)

Since 1974, the Washington Office on Latin America has promoted human rights, democracy and social and economic justice in Latin America and the Caribbean. WOLA works closely with civil society organizations and government officials throughout the Americas; it has programs on citizen security (including police reform, organized crime, and youth gang violence), on US drug policy, and on trade and development issues, as well as country focused human rights programs on Mexico, Guatemala, Colombia, Venezuela, and Cuba. WOLA's Cuba program, founded in 1995, encourages U.S. policy-makers to move towards normalized relations with Cuba on the grounds that engagement with Cuba is a more sensible, more effective, and more humane strategy for promoting human rights and social justice.

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# Commentary: Lifting ban would make Cuba freer, open

By Bob Stallman

WASHINGTON — It amazes me that it is 2009 and Americans are still unable to visit or do business with Cuba. It is the only country in the world where our government bans Americans from traveling. Unfortunately, a lot of opportunities are being missed for both business and tourism because of these costly restrictions.

I was lucky enough to visit Cuba in 2002. I say lucky because both the country and its people are beautiful. It also helped me see firsthand the disarray left on Cuba's agriculture industry when the Russian troops left in the early 1990s and how Cubans are dealing with the aftermath.

My trip to Cuba shored up several things for me. First, Cuban citizens are good people and second, they need affordable food.

During my visit, it was striking to see tourists there from everywhere in the world except the United States. To remedy this, there is legislation on Capitol Hill that would open Cuba to travel for U.S. citizens. Further, President Obama recently relaxed rules to allow Cuban-Americans to visit their family, while easing financial and gift restrictions.

These actions bring us one step closer to increasing food and agricultural sales to Cuba, an important priority for the American Farm Bureau Federation. U.S. agricultural sales to Cuba have been on average \$400 million annually since 2000. With the embargo lifted, we expect that number would rise to \$1 billion annually.

While touring the Cuban countryside I realized the nation's ability to produce bulk commodities had significantly diminished after the Russians' departure. Other countries are taking advantage of the opportunity.

For example, I visited a joint venture project between an Israeli investor and the Cuban government to grow oranges. This is just one agriculture example and there are plenty more.

Being able to feed its citizens is a big priority for Cuba. It is a poor country, but its people are by no means malnourished. Every Cuban is given rations for basic foods, such as milk and rice. When I was there, a campaign was in place encouraging average citizens in cities to plant plots of vegetables in order to help produce food.

There are many practical reasons the United States and Cuba should be trading. The Cuban government allocates a specific sum of money to buy food and pay transportation costs for those imports. Transportation costs would be minimal between the United States

and Cuba compared to Europe or Asia, which means more money could go toward feeding Cuba's citizens instead of being burned up in shipping costs.

By removing U.S. restrictions on Cuba, we also weaken the totalitarian grip on that nation's citizens. History has shown we can do more to spread democracy by opening travel and trade to other countries. By working as ambassadors of change in those countries we can have more positive impact on the lives of the Cuban people than anything we have done under this embargo over the last 47 years.

The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. After nearly a half century, the time is now to open Cuba's border to U.S. citizens, businesses and ideals.

### **ABOUT THE WRITER**

Bob Stallman is president of the American Farm Bureau Federation. Readers may write him at 600 Maryland Avenue SW, Suite 800, Washington, D.C. 20024.

This essay is available to McClatchy-Tribune News Service subscribers. McClatchy-Tribune did not subsidize the writing of this column; the opinions are those of the writer and do not necessarily represent the views of McClatchy-Tribune or its editors.

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CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

R. BRUCE JOSTEN  
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT  
GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

1615 H STREET, N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20062-2000  
202/463-5310

March 26, 2009

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS:

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the world's largest business federation representing more than three million businesses and organizations of every size, sector, and region, would like to express its support for H.R. 874 and S. 428, the "Freedom to Travel to Cuba Act," introduced by Reps. Delahunt and Flake and Sens. Dorgan and Enzi. The Chamber supports efforts to broaden economic engagement with the island in the belief that additional commercial and people-to-people contacts would promote a transition to democracy and full civil liberties.

Allowing Americans to act as ambassadors of freedom and democracy is an important first step in reforming U.S. policy toward Cuba. The last 50 years of U.S. policy toward Cuba have proven that unilateral sanctions do not work. Rather than encouraging Cuba to democratize, the embargo made a martyr out of a tyrant and actually helped prop up the Communist regime.

Unilateral sanctions also isolate the United States from its allies who choose not to join the U.S. in imposing sanctions, denying U.S. companies access to markets and bolstering third-country competitors. For American businesses, the U.S. International Trade Commission estimated in 2001 that the Cuba embargo costs American exporters up to \$1.2 billion annually in lost sales. Moreover, the embargo does not just hurt American businesses, but also workers and farmers who would benefit from trading with Cuba.

Because of the need to reform U.S. policy toward Cuba, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce urges Congress to pass H.R. 874 and S. 428 swiftly as an important first step toward a policy more likely to bring change to Cuba and commercial benefits to the United States.

Sincerely



R. Bruce Josten

January 21, 2009

The Honorable Barack Obama  
President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

Congratulations on being elected President of the United States. We wish you every success and look forward to working with you and your administration. In particular, we express our willingness to work with you to bring immediate and full change with regard to U.S. policy toward trade and economic relations with Cuba. Open two-way trade and travel with Cuba not only allows Cuba to generate the foreign exchange it requires to buy more products from the U.S., but it also significantly improves our relationships with our other trading partners in the region.

Trade with Cuba is important to the United States for economic, diplomatic, and geopolitical reasons. We respectfully urge you to use your executive authority to open up U.S. – Cuba trade and travel by eliminating regulatory restrictions on personal and commercial travel to Cuba and allowing normal commercial transactions and direct payment terms. It is our understanding that such direct payment terms are currently allowed for payment of services provided by travel companies and telecommunications companies. U.S. payment and travel restrictions have been the two principal impediments to normalized trade flows with Cuba. Removing these unjustified obstacles at once after you have taken office will effect meaningful, meritorious change that is long overdue.

Furthermore, devastating hurricanes last year damaged homes, infrastructure, and crops across the island. Opening up unrestricted trade with Cuba would allow our nation to also focus on Cuba's humanitarian needs in an unimpeded manner.

Letters from 104 U.S. Representatives and 24 U.S. Senators, sent last year, demonstrate strong bipartisan Congressional support for improving U.S. – Cuba relations. In 2000, Congress reinforced the importance and value of agricultural and medical trade with Cuba with passage of the Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act (TSRA). Since then, Congress has demonstrated repeatedly its desire to open trade with Cuba by adopting legislative language in appropriations bills that would overturn anti-business regulatory impediments to U.S. – Cuba trade that interfered with the 2000 TSRA statute.

Page 2  
January 2009

Our organizations' members represent a wide cross section of U.S. agricultural producers, food processors, and exporters who have strongly supported unobstructed trade with Cuba for many years. Unimpeded U.S. – Cuba trade and travel will immediately benefit U.S. agricultural, humanitarian, commercial/industrial, financial, and transportation, sectors.

Now is the time to change U.S. relations with Cuba to an unrestricted, unobstructed status that facilitates normal trade flows and open travel. We express our strong interest and willingness to work with you to bring about this timely and positive change. Thank you for your consideration of this key issue for our industries.

Respectfully,

American Farm Bureau Federation  
American Meat Institute  
American Soybean Association  
National Association of Wheat Growers  
National Barley Growers Association  
National Chicken Council  
National Corn Growers Association  
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives  
National Milk Producers Federation  
National Oilseed Processors Association  
National Sorghum Producers  
National Turkey Federation  
North American Export Grain Association  
North American Millers Association  
Northharvest Bean Growers Association  
USA Dry Pea and Lentil Council  
USA Rice Federation  
U.S. Dairy Export Council  
U.S. Grains Council  
US Rice Producers Association  
U.S. Wheat Associates



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April 2, 2009

**The National Tour Association Joins the Freedom to Travel to Cuba Act Team**

**LEXINGTON, Ky.** — The National Tour Association strongly supports The Freedom to Travel to Cuba Act, H.R. 874 and S. 428, which was announced Tuesday by co-sponsors of the legislation, Senators Byron Dorgan, D-North Dakota, and Michael Enzi, R-Wyoming. With more than 700 tour company members, many of which offer travel outbound from the United States, NTA recognizes the importance of this market and the freedom to travel.

In the material distributed Tuesday by the Senate sponsors, NTA was cited as a leading travel sector organization member of the Freedom to Travel to Cuba Coalition.

“NTA has supported this issue for many years, and we now stand strongly behind the passage of this legislation,” said NTA President Lisa Simon, CTP. “Americans should have the opportunity to explore the world unfettered by travel and currency restrictions, and we anticipate a very high demand for tours to Cuba through our tour operator members who see phenomenal curiosity for travel there. With The Freedom to Travel to Cuba Act, Americans can travel to Cuba to experience the rich diversity of Cuban culture and heritage.”

Senators Dorgan and Enzi, along with co-sponsor Senator Christopher Dodd, D-Connecticut, held a news conference Tuesday announcing the introduction of the legislation. Representatives Bill Delahunt, D-Massachusetts, and Jeff Flake, R-Arizona, also are introducing the legislation during a news conference today.

For their leadership with this legislation, Simon said that NTA applauds Senators Dorgan, Enzi, Dodd, and so-sponsoring Senator Richard Lugar, R-Indiana; House co-

sponsors Delahunt and Flake, as well as Representative Sam Farr, D-California, co-chair of the House Tourism Caucus and the more than 100 other sponsors in the House.

“Once the legislation is passed, success in this new market will depend on helping our tour operators learn about Cuba,” Simon said. “We stand ready to assist them in this new business development.”

Re-examination of travel restrictions, which is addressed by The Freedom to Travel to Cuba Act, was one of the seven recommendations submitted to President Obama and leaders of Congress as the result of the December 2008 summit of travel and tourism organizations.

The National Tour Association is the preferred association in the tourism industry for packaged travel professionals. NTA strives to provide value for its members by advancing the packaged travel industry through its advocacy efforts and progressive leadership. Connecting its members through business development, government relations, professional development and research, NTA has remained committed to serving its members with integrity and quality service since its founding in 1951. Today, the NTA membership represents 40 countries, and includes tour and travel packagers of all types. To learn more about the most important destination for packaged travel professionals, please visit [www.NTAonline.com](http://www.NTAonline.com).

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\*\* Photo of Senators Dorgan, Dodd and Enzi from the news conference available upon request.

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   [tracyg@fb.org](mailto:tracyg@fb.org)                      [macet@fb.org](mailto:macet@fb.org)

## **AFBF Calls for Lifting Cuba Travel Ban**

WASHINGTON, D.C., March 31, 2009—American Farm Bureau Federation President Bob Stallman joined congressional members today on Capitol Hill to advocate the removal of travel restrictions to Cuba. Stallman spoke in support of S. 428, sponsored by Sens. Byron Dorgan (D- N.D.), Michael Enzi (R-Wyo.), Christopher Dodd (D-Conn.) and Richard Lugar (R-Ind.), which opens Cuba to travel by U.S. citizens and gives the U.S. president authority to restrict travel to Cuba only in times of war or imminent danger.

“This legislation is an important step in easing trade restrictions on Cuba,” Stallman said. “Allowing unrestricted travel to Cuba will increase U.S. agricultural sales and boost tourism.”

U.S. agricultural sales to Cuba have been on average \$400 million annually since 2000, with top commodity sales including poultry, wheat, soybeans, rice and dairy. With passage of S. 428, AFBF expects sales to increase.

In addition, language in the omnibus appropriations bill further aids U.S. agriculture by allowing travel on a general license for those making agricultural sales to Cuba rather than the specific license currently needed. This would ease delays that significantly impact the ability to transact commercial sales with Cuba, which in some cases, have been lost to U.S. competitors because of the restriction.

Other priorities for AFBF in regard to Cuba include commercially defining “cash payments in advance” as intended by Congress in the 2000 Trade Sanctions and

Reform Act; allowing the country to directly wire payment to U.S. banks instead of going through a third-country bank as it does now; and issuing visas for Cuban inspectors to travel to the U.S. to meet with suppliers, inspect facilities and verify procedures and standards associated with the sale of U.S. food and agricultural exports to Cuba.



**For Immediate Release  
March 30, 2009**

*Contact:*

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## **U.S. Wheat Industry Supports Increased Trade With Cuba**

The U.S. wheat industry urges Congress and the Obama Administration to immediately ease trade and travel restrictions with Cuba to allow U.S. wheat growers to fully realize potential sales.

As members of an industry that exports more than half of its production in a typical year, U.S. wheat growers rely on the ability to open and expand international markets. Cuba represents substantial potential for future sales of U.S. wheat with a population of more than 11 million that consumes close to 1 MMT of wheat per year. Cuba is the largest importer of wheat and wheat products in the Caribbean.

Though proximity and historical ties should provide a competitive advantage for U.S. wheat, the U.S. holds a less than 50 percent market share in Cuba, compared to a more than 85 percent market share in other Caribbean areas. Over the past ten years, Cuba has imported greater quantities of wheat from the European Union, Canada and Argentina, with an estimated cost to the U.S. wheat industry of the continued trade restrictions at upwards of \$40 million per year.

The U.S. wheat industry believes that the best way to help U.S. wheat growers fully realize sales potential in Cuba is to overturn the February 2005 change to financing requirements and to lift travel restrictions to allow for the freedom of reciprocal travel between the U.S. and Cuba for all citizens.

U.S. Wheat Associates, an export market development organization working in more than 85 countries, has continually stressed to the Obama Administration and its predecessors the harm current Cuba policy does to U.S. wheat's prospects with the island nation.

The National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG), the industry's policy advocacy organization, strongly supports immediate legislative action to clarify the payment rules and ease travel restrictions hamstringing U.S.-Cuba wheat trade. **The Freedom to Travel to Cuba Act (H.R. 874/S. 428), Agricultural Export Facilitation Act of 2009 (H.R. 1737) and others are vital to achieving these goals.**

###



### **U.S. Dairy Industry Support for HR 874 and S 428**

The U.S. Dairy Export Council and the National Milk Producers Federation support the passage of HR 874 and S. 428. These bills would open up new opportunities for our members to more easily travel to Cuba to further encourage sales of U.S. dairy products there and to develop enhanced ties between the American and Cuban people.

This facilitation of the travel of U.S. firms to Cuba would help develop exports of chronically short supplies of nutritiously necessary dairy products. Therefore, USDEC and NMPF encourage the enactment during this Congress of these two bills, as well as other legislation that would enhance relationships with the Cuban people and open up the opportunity to provide a neighboring market with high quality American agricultural products at affordable prices.

# CUBA STUDY GROUP

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**December 10, 2008**

**Contact: Tomas Bilbao**  
**Cell: 202-714-1153**

## **CUBA STUDY GROUP CALLS ON U.S. GOVERNMENT TO LIFT ALL RESTRICTIONS ON TRAVEL AND REMITTANCES TO CUBA**

Washington, DC – Today the Cuba Study Group released a white paper titled: “**Lifting Restrictions on Travel and Remittances to Cuba: A Case for Unilateral Action,**” calling on the U.S. government to lift all restrictions on travel and remittances to Cuba for all Americans.

“The Cuba Study Group recommends that the United States unilaterally lift all restrictions limiting the ability of U.S. persons (citizens and residents) to travel to Cuba, and authorize all U.S. persons to freely and without limitations send remittances to individuals on the island, with sensible exceptions. We believe such steps are not only consistent with the values of the United States, but will also allow U.S. nationals to help the long suffering people of Cuba and strengthen the internal pro-democracy movement,” reads the document.

The call is a first of its kind for a leading Cuban exile organization in that it recognizes the rights of all Americans, not just Americans of Cuban origin, to travel and send remittances to the island. The documents argues that these restrictions not only violate fundamental American rights and family values and are inconsistent with U.S. policies everywhere else in the world, but also that the benefits of U.S. travel, such as enhanced flows of information, national reconciliation, the potential for strengthening civil society, and the ability to more easily and effectively assist the pro-democracy movement on the island, far outweigh any collateral benefits to the regime.

“It is time to put politics aside and to inject ethical considerations into a debate where they have been absent for such a long time. Current restrictions on travel and remittances are inconsistent with U.S. values and objectives of assisting civil society, breaking the information embargo and encouraging national reconciliation. It is time the U.S. government listened to the brave democracy advocates and civil society leaders inside Cuba who have called for a change in these policies,” stated Tomas Bilbao, the Group’s executive director.

The white paper can be found on the Group’s website: [www.CubaStudyGroup.org](http://www.CubaStudyGroup.org).

###

*The Cuba Study Group is a non-profit, non-partisan organization, comprised of Cuban business and community leaders who share a common interest and vision of a free and democratic Cuba.*

*Our mission is to facilitate in Cuba peaceful change leading to democracy, a free and open society, respect for human rights and the rule of law, a market-based economy, and the reunification of the Cuban nation.*

**[www.CubaStudyGroup.org](http://www.CubaStudyGroup.org)**

611 Pennsylvania Avenue, S.E. #208 • Washington, DC 20003  
tele: (202) 544-5088 • fax: (202) 315-3271 • email: [info@CubaStudyGroup.org](mailto:info@CubaStudyGroup.org)

Havana, April 2, 2009

We fully support lifting all restrictions on Americans to travel to Cuba. It would contribute to better knowing and understanding the realities in our countries. Even by a simple conversation, sharing every day experiences, Americans would be demonstrating how your society is capable of constantly deepening and improving democracy, and could help our own efforts for democracy.

Restrictions from the United States, particularly the embargo, have been used by the Cuban government as an excuse to justify the totalitarian regime and repression. Those policies have proven ineffective and counterproductive.

Although in Cuba no significant changes have been put in place by Raul Castro's Administration, for the first time in 50 years the possibility exists to open a pathway to change. The alleged willingness of the Cuban President to improve relations with the United States must be encouraged.

It is a contradiction that The United States is the 4<sup>th</sup> largest Cuban trading partner, but Americans and Cuban Americans are deprived of their right to assist the Cuban people by building bridges.

We believe that contacts between Americans and Cubans from all walks of life and American tourism are of the utmost importance.

Miriam Leiva  
Independent Journalist  
Human Rights Activist

Oscar Espinosa Chepe  
Independent Economist and Journalist  
Prisoner of conscience of the 75, sentenced to  
20 years on March 2003,  
On conditional release due to serious health problems

## **Charting a New Course on U.S.-Cuba Policy: Seizing a Historic Opportunity**

### **An Open Letter to President-elect Barack Obama: Mr. Obama, Tear Down This Wall**

The next President of the United States, Barack Obama, will have the unprecedented opportunity to change a policy that for nearly half a century has been ineffective in improving the lives of the Cuban people and advancing the interests of the United States.

The laws and regulations Washington has implemented over the past five decades with the intent of isolating Cuba and changing its government have served only to preserve the status quo and isolate the United States from its neighbors and the international community as a whole.

A clear manifestation of this is the fact that, for the last 17 years, the United Nations General Assembly has repeatedly and virtually unanimously repudiated the U.S. embargo of the island nation. This year's vote, on October 29, 2008, was more lopsided than ever. Out of 192 states, 185 voted *against* the United States. Only two countries supported the U.S. position (Israel and Palau), while the remaining four either abstained (Micronesia, the Marshall Islands) or declined to vote (El Salvador and Iraq).

With the alleged purpose of improving the economic and political lives of the Cuban people, ten U.S. Presidents, from Dwight Eisenhower to George W. Bush, have tried and failed to bring about change in Cuba by limiting diplomatic, commercial, and personal contacts with the island and by attempting to strangle the Cuban economy. It is not surprising that a policy based on the perverse logic that lack of contact will induce change has been a total failure.

U.S. policy toward Cuba has not only been a failure in attaining its stated objectives of inducing democratic changes on the island. It also has placed the most powerful nation on the planet in the embarrassing position of acting as if threatened by a nation the size of Pennsylvania with a shrunken military capability and a sputtering economy. What other explanation than an absurd perception of threat is there for the United States to forbid its own citizens—including and most egregiously its citizens of Cuban origin—to travel to Cuba? The limit on family visits to once every three years regardless of emergencies and

other humanitarian concerns is an especially cruel policy not applied to U.S. citizens from any other national origin.

In reality, of course, the U.S. is hardly threatened by Cuba, and a great nation's policy should not be based on pique. U.S. policy toward the island is maintained neither by sound foreign policy considerations nor by any credible threat to U.S. national security. As everyone recognizes, in the post-Soviet era, the embargo is sustained principally by domestic political concerns. The result of pandering to a shrinking but still powerful minority within the Cuban American population is a failed policy harmful to the interests of Cubans, Cuban Americans, and the United States.

Outdated assumptions about Cuban American voting behavior and Florida electoral politics and the exaggerated influence of some members of the Cuban American community have kept such a senseless policy in place. As members of that community, ENCASA calls upon the new President of the United States to take the historic step of changing course away from an ineffective, counterproductive, unjust, and harmful path toward one more consistent with the interests of the United States and the Cuban people on both sides of the Florida Straits.

The present moment is unprecedented in providing the opportunity for the new President of the United States to depart from a policy that has kept ten of his predecessors from achieving a positive impact on U.S.-Cuba relations:

Such a policy should be based on the realities of 2009 and not those of 1959:

1. *The Cuban American community is no longer monolithic (if it ever was) in supporting the continuing isolation of Cuba.* Opinion polls and local electoral challenges in Miami indicate that among Cuban Americans the younger generation and more recent arrivals have more nuanced attitudes toward U.S. policy than those of the dwindling members of the old guard. The extreme measures adopted in 2004 by the U.S. government severely limiting visits by Cuban Americans to their loved ones on the island, narrowing the definition of family and restricting remittances, only served to turn more Cuban Americans against a policy that harms the Cuban family. Many of them have for the first time found the courage to oppose the continuing imposition of the political will of an entrenched minority within the community.
2. *Changes in Cuba since the replacement of Fidel Castro as president point to an evolution of the Cuban political system in the direction of a greater willingness to consider alternatives that were previously not possible.* The tendency towards a greater pragmatism and away from ideologically-based policies is likely to make the government in Havana more amenable to engaging in meaningful actions that will improve the economic and political life of the Cuban people and change the nature of U.S.-Cuba relations.

We therefore call upon the next President of the United States, Barack Obama, to take advantage of these opportunities and initiate a historic course of action:

1. Immediately rescind the 2004 restrictions on Cuban American travel and remittances to the island.
2. Permit unrestricted travel by U.S. citizens to Cuba.
3. Signal to the Cuban government a willingness to enter into conversations with the purpose of exploring ways to normalize relations between the two countries for their mutual benefit and to improve the lives of the Cuban people.

These steps would be loudly applauded by Americans, Cuban Americans, Cubans and Latin Americans—indeed, by the international community as a whole. To adopt the course of action we envision would send a very clear message to the entire world that a new U.S. administration is embarking on a new foreign policy based on communication and engagement.

*ENCASA/US-CUBA is a national network of more than 400 scholars, artists, writers, academics and professionals affiliated with universities in more than 150 cities in 37 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. For more information, see <http://www.encasa-us-cuba.org/>*



May 27, 2009

Dear Member of Congress:

As leaders of national and local Cuban-American organizations, we are writing to urge you to co-sponsor “The Freedom to Travel to Cuba Act (S. 428 and H.R. 874),” which would restore the right to travel to Cuba for all Americans.

President Obama said, “There are no better ambassadors for freedom than Cuban Americans,” and as promised in his campaign he removed all restrictions on the right of Cuban Americans to visit their families in Cuba and provide them with financial support.

While we are very thankful to our President for honoring this commitment to our community, we strongly believe that Americans of *all* backgrounds should have the legal right to travel to Cuba and stand with us as ambassadors for the values, ideas, and freedoms that our country represents.

It is up to Congress to change the law, and empower all Americans to engage in cultural, religious, humanitarian and educational contacts with the Cuban people, and we believe that the time for making that change is now.

The primary sponsors in the Senate are Senators Dorgan, Enzi, Lugar and Dodd. In the House, the primary sponsors are Representatives Delahunt and Flake

Cuba is the only country in the world to which the United States prevents its citizens from traveling. By supporting and working to pass this bill, you will take the historic step of ending this counterproductive and unjust policy and replacing it with one that is consistent with America’s values and the best interests of the people of the United States and Cuba.

**We urge you to co-sponsor Senate Bill S. 428 or the House bill H.R. 874.** Please contact Senator Dorgan’s office or Senator Enzi’s office; or, in the House please contact Representative Delahunt’s office or Representative Flake’s office with questions or to cosponsor this important and timely legislation.

Respectfully,

Jose M. Estevez  
La Alianza Martiana  
*California*

Sandra M. Alfonso  
President  
American Health Inc.  
*Louisiana*

Ariel Fernandez  
Founder  
Asho Productions  
*New York*

Marisela Perez  
Boston Police Department  
*Massachusetts*

Patricia Gutierrez Menoyo  
Cambio Cubano  
*National*

Dr. Alberto N. Jones  
President/Founder  
Jennifer and Silvia Jones  
Alicia Bailey  
The Caribbean American Children  
Foundation  
*Florida*

Sgt Carlos Lazo  
Veteran of the Operation Iraqi Freedom  
Center for Democracy in the Americas  
*Seattle, Washington*

Delvis Fernandez Levy, PhD  
Founder and President  
Cuban American Alliance Education Fund  
(CAAEF)  
*California/ National*

Elena E. Maroth  
Cuban American Alliance Education Fund  
(CAAEF)  
*California*

Luis Rumbaut  
Attorney  
Cuban American Alliance Education Fund  
(CAAEF)  
*Washington D.C. / National*

Patricia L. Morán  
Cuban American Alliance Educational Fund  
(CAAEF)  
*Washington DC, Maryland*

Regino Diaz  
Cuban American Alliance Education Fund  
(CAAEF)  
*Texas/ National*

Alvaro Fernandez  
Cuban American Commission for Family  
Rights  
*Miami, Florida*

Juan M. Alamo  
Director/ Treasurer  
The Cuban Artists Fund  
*New York*

Alfredo Duran  
Cuban Committee for Democracy (CCD)  
*Miami, Florida / National*

Jose Manuel Palli  
Cuba Legal Forum  
*Miami, Florida*

Rubén G. Rumbaut  
ENCASA- Emergency Network of Cuban  
American Scholars and Artists  
Professor at the University of California,  
Irvine  
*California/ National*

Dr. Lillian Manzor  
ENCASA - Emergency Network of Cuban  
American Scholars and Artists for Change in  
US-Cuba Policy  
Cuban/Latino Theater Archive  
University of Miami, Florida

Juan C. Artigas  
EMRN Group, Inc.  
The U.S.- Cuba Lift the Embargo PAC, Inc.  
*Florida*

Geni Gomez  
Director  
Freddie Mac  
*Virginia*

Isidro (Chilo) Borja  
President  
Foundation for Normalization of US/Cuba  
Relations  
*National*

Elena R. Freyre  
Executive Committee  
Foundation for Normalization of US/Cuba  
Relations  
*Miami, Florida*

Julio V Ruiz, MD  
Secretary to the Board of Directors  
Foundation for Normalization of US/Cuba  
Relations  
*Miami, Florida*

Marisela Fleites Lear  
Green River Community College  
*Washington*

Omar Martinez  
Juris Doctor/Master of Public Health  
Indiana University Bloomington  
*Indiana*

Ariel Hidalgo  
Bureau of Human Rights  
INFOBURO  
*Florida*

Instituto de Estudios Cubanos  
*Miami, Florida*

Margarita Fazzolari  
Interreligious Foundation for Community  
Organization  
Casa de las Americas  
*New Jersey/ National*

Joe Perez  
COB & CEO  
J Perez Associates, Inc.  
*Long Beach, California*

Manuel Hidalgo  
Latino Economic Development Corporation  
*Washington DC*

Eileen Del Pino  
Register Nurse  
Los Angeles County Department of Public  
Health  
*California*

John Paul Cabrera, BASW, PPS, MSW  
Los Angeles Unified School District  
*California*

Ricardo A. Gonzalez  
President  
Madison-Camaguey Sister City Association  
*Wisconsin*

Carmen Rumbaut  
Madison-Camaguey Sister City Association  
*Wisconsin*

Rev Leonides Penton Amador  
President  
La Mano Amiga Internacional Inc.  
*Florida*

Teresa Gutierrez  
Activist  
New York Committee to Free the Cuban  
Five,  
*New York City, NY*

Rolando H. Castaneda  
InterAmerican Development Bank (retired)  
Senior Operations Officer  
*Washington, DC*

Andres Hernandez  
Partido Demócrata Cristiano  
*National/ International*

Silvia Wilhelm  
Executive Director  
Puentes Cubanos  
*Miami, Florida*

Lorenzo Gonzalo  
Sub director de Radio Miami  
*Broward County, Florida*

Siro del Castillo  
Solidaridad de Trabajadores Cubanos  
*National*

Laura Urgelles  
The Washington Ballet  
*Washington, DC*

Rosie Hidalgo  
*Vienna, Virginia*

Eulalia Suarez viuda de Mooney  
*Fairfax, Virginia*

Jorge Milanes Pino President/Founder  
West Coast Cuban American Alliance  
*California*

Anthony O. Perez  
*California*

Daniel Batista  
*Virginia*

Ernesto J. Sallés  
*Alexandria, Virginia*

Fidel Garcia  
*Washington DC*

Lisa R. Zuccato-Perez  
*California*

Rafamali and Heather Ramirez  
*Georgia*

*\* note all organizations are listed for  
identification purpose only*



# Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: [Laura Ingalls](#)

## **New Bill on Cuba Vital to Advance Democracy, End Stalemate**

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**Washington  
March 30, 2009**

A new Senate bill that would remove the ban on American citizen travel to Cuba would be an important contribution to U.S. policy to promote democratic reform in Havana.

"This bill is in no way meant to reward Cuba's regime, rather it is a necessary strategy to advance democratic change and strengthen relationships with the Cuban people at a critical time in their country's history," said Jennifer Windsor, Freedom House executive director. Despite the longstanding trade embargo on Cuba, the island nation has consistently ranked among the world's worst regimes in Freedom House's annual Freedom in the World survey.

The Senate bill is scheduled to be unveiled Tuesday at a press conference featuring several high-ranking Senators including Senate Democratic Policy Committee Chairman Byron L. Dorgan (N.D.); Banking Committee Chairman Christopher J. Dodd (D-Conn.) and Richard G. Lugar (Ind.), the top Republican on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Freedom House advocated for the policy change in a press release in early January, prior to President Barack Obama taking office. The full text of that statement, in English and Spanish, is below:

### **Obama Administration Should Pursue New Approach to Promote Democracy in Cuba**

Washington – January 7, 2009 – The United States should reinvigorate efforts to advance human rights and democracy in Cuba, Freedom House said today. One key element of a strengthened policy would be the lifting of U.S. legal restrictions on American citizen travel to the island.

Cuba has consistently received either the lowest or second-lowest ratings on political rights and civil liberties by Freedom House since it first began publishing the global Freedom in the World survey in 1972. Cuba's citizens are denied most fundamental rights, including the right to elect their government, participate in political opposition, freely express their views, demonstrate, participate in trade

unions, own property, travel, or access information free of government control. Since Raul Castro succeeded his brother as leader of Cuba, some nominal reforms have been announced, though their impact on the lives of Cubans remains negligible.

"Cuba remains one of the most repressive countries in the world," said Jennifer Windsor, executive director of Freedom House. "It is well past time to reassess a policy that impedes the ability of American citizens to freely interact with Cubans on a large scale and thus expose them to unfettered information about the outside world. We call on the incoming administration of Barack Obama to reexamine the embargo and to immediately lift the restrictions on remittances and travel to and from the island."

The United States first began introducing economic sanctions against Cuba in 1960 following that government's seizure without compensation of U.S. assets on the island. Current U.S. sanctions, which strictly limit trade with Cuba to cash-only sales of U.S. farm products and medical supplies, are unique to all other U.S. sanction policies in that they also prohibit U.S. citizens from traveling to Cuba unless they obtain a U.S. government waiver.

"While the Bush administration expanded American support for democracy activists in Cuba, U.S. policy would be even more effective if Americans were allowed to engage more freely with Cuban counterparts," Windsor continued. "Those countries that have moved from dictatorship to democracy in recent decades have done so in large part because of the movement of people and ideas across borders."

The United States does not impose similarly restrictive travel sanctions on Americans to other regimes that receive Freedom House's lowest freedom ratings, including Burma, Libya, North Korea, Somalia, Sudan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan.

For more information on Cuba see:

Freedom in the World 2008: Cuba

Freedom of the Press 2008: Cuba

Change in Cuba: How Citizens View Their Country's Future

Freedom House, an independent nongovernmental organization that supports the expansion of freedom in the world, has been monitoring political rights and civil liberties in Cuba since 1972.

Freedom matters.  
Freedom House makes a difference.

[www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org)

###



**Statement by José Miguel Vivanco  
Americas Director, Human Rights Watch  
March 31, 2009**

**News Conference on the Freedom to Travel to Cuba Act**

Human Rights Watch fully supports the Freedom to Travel to Cuba Act, which would end a decades-old travel ban that violates international human rights law, has caused considerable suffering for families, and has failed completely to bring change to Cuba.

A report by Human Rights Watch, “Families Torn Apart,” documented the terrible human cost of these restrictions and found that they infringed upon the internationally recognized right to freedom of movement and violated the international prohibition on the involuntary separation of families.

Yet for all of its costs, this policy has proved completely ineffective when it comes to pressuring the Cuban government to dismantle its repressive machinery. The Freedom to Travel to Cuba Act is a necessary first step in replacing an ineffective, unilateral policy toward Cuba with a more targeted, multilateral approach.

**To read the October 2005 Human Rights Watch report, “Families Torn Apart: The High Cost of US and Cuban Travel Restrictions,” please visit:**

<http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2005/10/18/families-torn-apart>

**For more of Human Rights Watch’s work on Cuba, please visit:**

<http://www.hrw.org/en/americas/cuba>

**For more information, please contact:**

In Washington DC, José Miguel Vivanco (English, Spanish): +1-917-379-1180 (mobile); or [vivancj@hrw.org](mailto:vivancj@hrw.org)



April 13, 2009

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As former senior officers of the United States armed forces, we are writing today to encourage you to support the Congressional initiatives to end the ban on travel to Cuba for all Americans.

The current policy of isolating Cuba has failed, patently, to achieve our ends. Cuba ceased to be a military threat decades ago. At the same time, Cuba has intensified its global diplomatic and economic relations with nations as diverse as China, Russia, Venezuela, Brazil, and members of the European Union. It is hard to characterize such global engagement as isolation.

Though economically weak, the Castro government has kept the broad support of its people by responding to economic shocks and providing universal access to health care and education. There will be no counter-revolution any time soon.

Instead, the current embargo serves more to prop up the Castro regime and shows no sign of triggering a popular uprising against the communist government it runs. When hard times fall on the Cuban people, inevitably, the Cuban government blames the U.S. “bloqueo” for the suffering. And the people, with a strong sense of national sovereignty, rally to their flag.

Even worse, the embargo has inspired a significant diplomatic movement against U.S. policy. As military professionals, we understand that America’s interests are best served when the United States is able to attract the support of other nations to our cause. When world leaders overwhelmingly cast their vote in the United Nations against the embargo and visit Havana to denounce American policy, it is time to change the policy, especially after 50 years of failure in attaining our goals.

The congressional initiative to lift the travel ban for all Americans is an important first step toward lifting the embargo, a policy more likely to bring change to Cuba. It begins to move the United States in an unambiguous direction toward the kind of policy—based on principled engagement and proportional and discriminate action that was the hallmark of your presidential campaign. Combined with renewed engagement with Havana on key security issues such as narcotics trafficking, immigration, airspace and Caribbean security, we believe the U.S. will be on a path to rid ourselves of the dysfunctional policy your administration has inherited.

It is a clear cut case. During the Cold War, the U.S. encouraged Americans to travel to the Soviet bloc resulting in more information, more contact, and more freedom for captive peoples, and ultimately the end of the Berlin Wall and the Cold War itself. This idea of engagement underlies our current policies toward Iran, Syria and North Korea all much graver concerns to the United States – where Americans are currently free to travel. By sending our best ambassadors—the American people—to engage their Cuban neighbors, we have a much better chance of influencing the eventual course of Cuban affairs. Broader economic engagement with the island through additional commercial and people-to-people contacts will in time promote a more pluralist and open society. And, by actually striking down an element of the embargo, that signal will be sent to the government in Havana.

Mr. President, around the world, leaders are calling for a real policy shift that delivers on the hope you inspired in your campaign. Cuba offers the lowest-hanging fruit for such a shift and would be a move that would register deeply in the minds of our partners and competitors around the world.

Sincerely,

/s  
Brigadier General John Adams (Ret.)

/s  
Lieutenant General John G. Castellaw (Ret.)

/s  
Lieutenant General Daniel W. Christman (Ret.)

/s  
Major General Paul D. Eaton (Ret.)

/s  
Lieutenant General Robert G. Gard (Ret.)

/s  
Rear Admiral Donald J. Guter (Ret.)

/s  
General James T. Hill (Ret.)

/s  
Rear Admiral John D. Hutson (Ret.)

/s  
Lieutenant General Claudia J. Kennedy (Ret.)

/s  
General Barry R. McCaffrey (Ret.)

/s  
Col. Lawrence B. Wilkerson (Ret.)

/s  
General Johnnie E. Wilson (Ret.)

Cc:

Rahm Emanuel, White House Chief of Staff  
Mona Sutphen, Deputy White House Chief of Staff  
Gen. James Jones, National Security Adviser  
Tom Donilon, Deputy National Security Adviser  
Denis McDonough, Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications  
James Steinberg, Deputy Secretary of State  
Ambassador Jeffrey Davidow, White House Adviser for the Summit of the Americas  
Jane Holl Lute, Department of Homeland Security Deputy Secretary  
Michele Flournoy, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy



## Committee on International Justice and Peace

3211 FOURTH STREET NE • WASHINGTON DC 20017-1194 • FAX 202-541-3339 • WWW.USCCB.ORG/JPHD

February 9, 2009

Rep. William Delahunt  
Chairman, Sub-Committee on  
International Organizations, Human  
Rights and Oversight  
Committee on Foreign Affairs  
U.S. House of Representatives

Rep. Jeff Flake  
Member, Sub-Committee on  
International Organizations, Human  
Rights and Oversight  
Committee on Foreign Affairs  
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Representatives Delahunt and Flake:

I write as chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) to express support for your initiative, supported by several colleagues from both sides of the aisle, in sponsoring H.R. 874, a bill to allow travel between the United States and Cuba.

The USCCB has for many years consistently called for relaxing the sanctions against Cuba. These policies have largely failed to promote greater freedom, democracy and respect for human rights in Cuba. At the same time, our nation's counterproductive policies have unnecessarily alienated many other countries in the hemisphere. Improving the lives of the Cuban people and encouraging democracy and human rights in Cuba will best be advanced through more, rather than less, contact between the Cuban and American people.

Existing restrictions on the ability of Cubans residing in this country to travel to Cuba are particularly objectionable. No one should be prevented from visiting a dying relative or attending a loved one's funeral simply because he or she has traveled to Cuba once in the previous three years. Like you, we support changes to this inhumane policy from the new Administration of President Obama who made commitments during the campaign to adjust administrative rules to facilitate travel to Cuba. Such changes, however welcome, cannot replace the need for the Congressional action contained in H.R. 874 that would lift all restrictions on travel by U.S. citizens to Cuba.

Our Conference of Bishops is pleased to note that other members of Congress have joined you in co-sponsoring this legislation and will encourage other members to co-sponsor and support final passage of this important piece of legislation.

With thanks and best wishes, I remain

Sincerely yours,

Most Reverend Howard J. Hubbard  
Bishop of Albany  
Chairman, Committee on International  
Justice and Peace

# RELIGIOUS LEADERS CALL FOR CHANGE IN CUBA TRAVEL POLICY

December 18, 2008

President-Elect Barack Obama  
451 6<sup>th</sup> Street N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear President-Elect Obama:

As leaders of Christian denominations, their agencies, and ecumenical organizations in the United States, we write to express appreciation for your statements indicating a new willingness to review and revise long-standing U.S. policy toward Cuba. We have a long collective history of missionary and humanitarian activity in the nation of Cuba. Our partnership with churches, denominations, and ecumenical organizations there goes back many years, and transcends political ideologies.

We urgently request you to change the Cuba policy of the United States in ways that will assist the churches in their work and benefit all Americans.

*Since 2005 U.S. church denominations, mission agencies and ecumenical organizations at the national and regional levels have suffered from severe restrictions on religious travel. We write to ask you to lift these restrictions. Our institutions are currently eligible only for very limited licenses. Some of our institutions have been unable to secure even these limited licenses.*

These impractical restrictions have reduced our ability to send religious delegations to Cuba, limited our opportunities to accompany and support our Cuban church partners, and have the effect of severely limiting participation in Cuba missions by many U.S. churches and congregants. *In addition to lifting the restrictions on religious travel, we urge you to end the travel ban for all Americans.*

We are also concerned that many Christian pastors and leaders in Cuba are unable to get visas for travel to the United States for church meetings and theological conferences. There appear to be a variety of factors at play in the denials, but one reason is the unduly negative view of the U.S. State Department toward leaders of the Cuban Council of Churches, which is the recognized ecumenical body of the traditional Cuban Protestant denominations.

We are convinced that it is time to change the ineffective and counter-productive U.S. policy toward Cuba and urge your Administration to take the following actions:

- ***Freely allow religious travel to Cuba.***
- ***Liberally grant visas for U.S. travel to Cuban pastors and other religious leaders, and no longer bar officials of the Cuban Council of Churches.***
- ***Lift the travel ban for all Americans.***

Beyond these immediate steps, we urge you to move to end the embargo on Cuba. We believe that the time has arrived to restore normal diplomatic relations with Cuba and to allow full engagement between the people of the United States and the people of Cuba.

For decades the U.S. policy toward Cuba has had unfortunate consequences for the Cuban people, while denying important freedoms to Americans. It has failed significantly in its stated

objective to precipitate change in the Cuban government. The hostility between the two governments has also limited relationships between Christians in the United States and those in Cuba, disrupting the close historical bonds between our churches. Cuban churches are growing rapidly, presenting new opportunities for U.S. churches and ecumenical institutions in the United States to relate to and support their Cuban brothers and sisters in Christ.

Thank you for recognizing and considering our concerns. We commit ourselves to pray for you, your family and your Administration. And we wish you every success in your efforts toward a more just, compassionate and peaceful world for all people.

Sincerely,

The Reverend John L. McCullough  
Executive Director and CEO  
Church World Service

The Reverend Dr. Michael Kinnamon  
General Secretary  
National Council of Churches

The Reverend Dr. Stan Hastey  
Minister for Mission & Ecumenism  
Alliance of Baptists

The Reverend Dr. A. Roy Medley  
General Secretary  
American Baptist Churches of the USA

The Reverend Dr. José Norat-Rodríguez  
Area Director for Iberoamerica & the  
Caribbean  
American Baptist Churches of the USA

The Reverend Dr. Sharon E. Watkins  
General Minister and President  
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
in the United States and Canada

Stanley Noffsiner  
General Secretary  
Church of the Brethren

The Reverend Phil Jones, Director  
Brethren Witness/Washington Office  
Church of the Brethren

The Most Reverend Katharine Jefferts Schori  
Presiding Bishop and Primate  
The Episcopal Church

The Reverend Mark S. Hanson  
Presiding Bishop  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Rolando Santiago  
Executive Director  
Mennonite Central Committee U.S.

The Reverend Gradye Parsons  
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly  
Presbyterian Church, (USA)

The Reverend Dr. Tyrone S. Pitts  
General Secretary  
Progressive National Baptist Convention

The Reverend Brenda Girton-Mitchell  
Ecumenical Officer  
Progressive National Baptist Convention

The Reverend Wesley Granberg-Michaelson  
General Secretary  
Reformed Church in America

The Reverend Dr. John H. Thomas  
General Minister and President  
United Church of Christ

The Reverend Edward W. Paup  
General Secretary  
General Board of Global Ministries  
United Methodist Church

James E. Winkler  
General Secretary  
General Board of Church and Society  
United Methodist Church

cc: Senator/Secretary of State-Designate Hillary Rodham Clinton