



# CUBA ADVOCACY TOOLKIT



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## TAKE ACTION

Join us in demanding an **end to the U.S. travel ban and trade embargo** against Cuba.



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# INTRODUCTION

**You just got back from Cuba. Congratulations!** After basking in the Caribbean sun, enjoying the warm hospitality of the Cuban people, working side by side with our Cuban sisters and brothers, salsa dancing the night away, and sipping on a mojito or fruit drink (or two), we know you're excited to spread the word about Cuba's amazing people, culture, and natural beauty. But unfortunately, merely telling your friends about how great Cuba is just doesn't cut it. It's simply not enough!

**If you loved Cuba, we hope you're also eager to take action to improve U.S.-Cuba relations.**

As you probably know, current U.S. policies towards our island neighbor make visiting far from easy. And more importantly, our **outdated and inhumane embargo against Cuba is hurting ordinary cubanos**—keeping families apart, harming small business owners, and depriving normal citizens of basic goods.

This **toolkit** is meant to empower you to take action to end the travel ban and trade embargo against Cuba. It outlines different ways you can use your experience to make a real impact and help chip away at these nonsensical policies.

**Together we will stand up for what's right.** You just took an important first step in the right direction—you traveled there! Now, we hope you'll lift up your voice for Cubans and Cuban Americans on both shores. And we're here to help you along the way.

# OVERVIEW OF U.S. CUBA POLICY: 2014 TO PRESENT

By Megan Pynes & Mavis Anderson. Updated on July 24, 2019.

Following decades of aggression, marked by a ceaseless embargo, a monumental decision was made on December 17, 2014, between the United States and Cuba to announce the establishment of diplomatic ties. Now, nearly five years after this milestone was reached and the embassies were reopened in each country, Americans and Cubans are watching as this budding, newfound relationship is tested, tried, and perhaps destroyed by the current administration.

Trump's June 16, 2017, National Security Presidential Memorandum (NSPM) on Strengthening the Policy of the United States Toward Cuba, which he **announced** would "cancel" the deals made by the Obama Administration, was the beginning of changes for U.S.-Cuban relations. In addition to continuing to implement the embargo, promises made by NSPM included ending individual "people-to-people" travel and, in an attempt to keep money from the Cuban government, banning U.S. corporations and citizens from doing business with the Armed Forces Business Enterprises Group (GAESA). These regulatory amendments were issued on November 9, 2017, by the U.S. Department of Treasury Office of Foreign Assets (OFAC), Department of Commerce, and Department of State. And this was just the beginning.

## What We Weren't Expecting

On October 3, 2017, the State Department expelled 15 Cuban diplomats from their embassy in Washington, D.C., just days after withdrawing 60 percent of U.S. staff from the U.S. Embassy in Havana. In addition, the U.S. Embassy stopped issuing visas to Cubans, refusing to refund deposits from previously submitted applications, and issued a travel warning for Americans planning to go to Cuba.

These events were in response to the supposed "sonic attacks" experienced by 24 U.S. diplomats and intelligence personnel living in Cuba. While Trump chose to place the **blame** on Cuba, his accusation directly contradicted the State Department's repeated statements that it does not know who or what caused the mysterious incidents. That mystery has not been solved. Both then-President Raúl Castro and Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla strongly denied any involvement of their government and have made clear their willingness to work closely with the United States in the investigation.

In addition to making diplomatic relations more difficult, the downsizing of both embassies slowed tasks dramatically and continues to leave their effectiveness extremely hard hit. The decision to stop issuing visas to Cubans is unacceptable and works to keep families separated by national lines. The option presented by the U.S. government in the wake of this decision is for Cubans to travel to a third country to visit another U.S. embassy or consulate in order to apply for a non-immigrant visa; this is implausible for most Cubans.

Though the travel warning has since been downgraded to a **travel advisory**, issuing an advisory for U.S. citizens wishing to travel to Cuba jeopardizes the Cuban economy and livelihood of many Cubans, especially owners of bed-and-breakfasts and family-owned restaurants. No tourists are known to have been harmed in any way by the supposed incidents; nevertheless, the advisory continues to discourage some from visiting. For some educational organizations, a travel advisory causes a regulatory cancellation of travel plans, regardless of the situation on the ground. As a result, some student travel

programs in Cuba and others, such as the Smithsonian's, have been cancelled. Americans visiting Cuba are a driving factor for Cuban economic growth and thus a limitation on travel, although unofficial, is detrimental to the Cuban people.

U.S. travelers and businesses alike are prohibited from engaging in direct financial transactions with **many Cuban enterprises**; this list includes numerous hotels, marinas, stores, and various other industries, and will be updated periodically. In terms of economic opportunity, these restrictions also prohibit U.S. corporations from investing in a booming new **development zone** in Mariel, Cuba, where numerous international groups are quickly settling in. For travelers, the restrictions are quite inconvenient and force them to be constantly checking with the list. Questions have arisen over whether Americans must be aware of and avoid something as trivial as having **rum** from an unauthorized vendor in their cocktails, as two rum companies are on the prohibited list.

Trump's initial restrictions towards Cuba were a hard step backward from the progress made during the Obama Administration. These changes were not a full overturn of the progress that was made during the previous administration, but were nonetheless an unfortunate detour from the path towards normalization.

### Further Rollbacks in Action

Not to be deterred, Trump continued his assault on Cuba in 2019. These are the additional damaging actions that have been put in the U.S. policy book by the current administration:

- (1) Implementation of Title III of the Helms-Burton Act. The **Helms-Burton Act** is a central part of the embargo on Cuba: it officially writes the reactionary policy into law, prohibiting any president from unilaterally lifting it. Specifically, **Title III allows U.S. nationals who owned property in Cuba that was seized by the Cuban government after the 1959 Revolution to sue U.S. and foreign companies** for profiting from their former properties. What's so egregious is that many of these are people who were Cuban citizens at the time. The infamous Title III had been waived every six months by every U.S. president, Republican and Democrat, since Helms-Burton came into effect in March 1996, because every president realized the damaging nature of this law, and because our allies around the world were extremely upset about its extraterritorial nature. Even the Trump Administration had previously waived Title III. Yet this administration, under the tutelage of National Security Adviser John Bolton—and Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL)—has taken a different tactic.

The administration, as of May 2, 2019, allowed Title III of Helms-Burton to go into effect, allowing lawsuits in U.S. courts against anyone "profiting" from formerly American-owned property in Cuba that was confiscated shortly after the 1959 Cuban revolution. Included in the definition of "American" are Cuban Americans who were Cuban citizens when their property was nationalized.

Relations with our allies, especially the European Union, Canada, Mexico, are strained over this action, and "some countries, including Canada, Spain and Mexico, have implemented 'blocking statutes,' which prevent Americans from going after foreign assets in those countries." Title III creates a chilling effect on companies, foreign and domestic, considering investing in Cuba, and the Cuban economy will suffer even more. **Yet, in the end, who suffers most? The Cuban people, of course.**

By mid-summer, 2019, only **four Title III lawsuits** had been filed since litigation was allowed to proceed. This contrasts to the nearly 6,000 claims that have been certified by the U.S. Foreign Claims Settlement Commission.

According to the “Daily Business Review” on law.com, the low number of suits filed is because the lawsuits are difficult, complex and costly. And, there are few ways to collect. “Exxon Mobil, for example, is suing two Cuban companies – CIMEX and CUPET – for confiscating refineries from its predecessor, Standard Oil. Even if Exxon wins a massive million-dollar judgment, there are few, if any, ways to force Cuba to pay up.” You can see a discussion of other lawsuits filed on the law.com website linked above. More lawsuits are likely to be filed, but it is unlikely that there will be the avalanche of lawsuits as had been feared.

- (2) Remittances Limitation. The administration **imposed a limit on Americans’ ability to send remittances to Cubans** on the island. Under President Obama’s policy, there had been no cap on remittances. This administration has limited remittances to \$1,000 per quarter, per person, to people living in Cuba. What is the effect of these new limits? **Families who depend on donations from family abroad in the United States will suffer** and many Cuban private sector entrepreneurs will be denied the assistance they need to receive capital for their businesses.
- (3) Banning of U-turn Financial Transactions. The Trump Administration has banned so-called “U-turn” transactions. Such transactions happen when foreigners transfer funds that must pass through a U.S. bank before being directed to the recipient in Cuba, or the other way around. This will **further discourage the global business community from investing in Cuba**, as substantial fees are incurred for processing Cuban transfers in U.S. dollars in institutions outside the United States.
- (4) Probably worst of all, implementation of new travel restrictions. The announcement of the implementation of Title III included a warning that the administration planned to “restrict non-family travel” to Cuba. It was clear that the administration was seeking to reduce the number of U.S. travelers to Cuba, with the aim of damaging the Cuban economy and undermining the Cuban government. **Yet we know that the real burden falls on Cuban families, Cuba’s private sector (self-employed Cubans and those who work for them), and Cuban civil society in general.**

This implicit threat became clear with these announcements:

- On June 4, 2019, the administration **announced** that **cruises from the United States were prohibited from sailing to Cuba starting on June 5, 2019**. Our friends at [Cuba Educational Travel](#) describe the new restrictions as “an end to authorizing private aircraft and sea vessel travel to Cuba, not including air or sea cargo transport. This effectively ended cruise, yacht, and other sea travel to Cuba and most private flights.”
- Also, the administration **eliminated the category of group people-to-people travel**, having already done away with individual people-to-people educational travel a year ago. The people-to-people travel category has been the category under which the majority of U.S. travelers on cultural and educational trips visited the island. (It’s important to note that the end of the people-to-people travel category was accompanied by a grandfathering provision, which means that *if the company or traveler had already started planning the trip before June 5th, it can go ahead as planned under the previous rules.*)
- The Department of State also added new entities to its “[Cuba Restricted List](#),” as shown on the department’s website. U.S. travelers and companies are prohibited from doing business with Cuban entities on that list.

**Cruel? Yes.** These measures hurt the average Cuban citizen, especially those who have started private businesses that heavily rely on tourism and educational travel. And they hurt the Cuban economy, thus making life more difficult for all Cubans. However, the embargo has failed for more than 55 years to effect regime change, and it won’t succeed now.

## You Can Still Travel to Cuba

**Rest assured that you can still travel to Cuba. And you can do it legally.**

Eleven of the previous 12 categories still exist for U.S. travel to Cuba:

1. Support for the Cuban people
2. Public performances, clinics, workshops, athletic and other competitions, and exhibitions in Cuba
3. Religious activities in Cuba
4. Humanitarian projects in Cuba
5. Professional research and professional meetings in Cuba
6. Educational activities in Cuba for universities (including study abroad)
7. Journalistic activities in Cuba
8. Activities in Cuba by private foundations or research and educational institutes
9. Exportation, importation, or transmission of information technologies or materials
10. Certain authorized export transactions including agricultural and medical products, as well as tools, equipment, and construction supplies for private use
11. Official business of the U.S. government, foreign governments, and certain intergovernmental organizations

In addition, **family visits to Cuba are unaffected** by the new regulations.

**If you had plans to travel individually to Cuba, you can still do it.** U.S. airlines are still conducting direct flights to Cuba. Call one of the travel agencies that specialize in Cuba travel and work with them to determine which of the eleven still-existing categories fit your needs and plans.

Many organizations coordinating group travel to Cuba have adjusted their delegation itineraries to fit the “support for the Cuban people” category, moving lodging from hotels to “casas particulares” (private homes), and will continue providing legal travel experiences.

The license authorized as Support for the Cuban People **was amended** under the new regulations to require individuals to “engage in a full-time schedule of activities that enhance contact with the Cuban people, support civil society in Cuba, or promote the Cuban people’s independence from Cuban authorities and that result in meaningful interactions with individuals in Cuba.” All American travelers are expected to keep a log of their activities and have a full itinerary with little downtime.

For example, the “support for the Cuban people” category can include:

- Staying in a private home instead of a hotel.
- Engaging with local businesses and independent entrepreneurs like artists, musicians, food vendors, filmmakers, private taxis, independent tour guides, etc.
- Eating at privately-owned restaurants known as “paladares.”
- Visiting privately-owned museums.
- Basically, just about anything that doesn’t patronize any of the businesses on the State Department’s list of restricted entities.

To fit into this category, you should engage in compliant activities for enough hours to fulfill a full-time schedule.

### **The Bottom Line**

It is clear that the embargo and travel restrictions that have defined the United States' policies towards Cuba for the last nearly 60 years have been nothing but harmful to the people of Cuba. While the changes made under the Obama Administration were a step in the right direction, they failed to tackle the root of the issue: the embargo. And Trump's full range of regulation changes takes the United States further from accomplishing this goal. They further complicate U.S. dealings with Cuba and discourage citizens from traveling merely for the fact that they make the process less clear. The actual decline of U.S. travel to Cuba is detrimental for the Cuban people, as their economic mobility relies on the presence of foreigners.

The embargo remains the most decisive factor hindering any attempt to normalize relations between the nations and promote the well-being of the Cuban people. After nearly six decades of enacting a destructive policy, it is time to end the embargo.

# TIMELINE OF EVENTS

- December 17, 2014** President Obama announces the [beginning of normalization](#) of relations with Cuba.
- January 16, 2015** U.S. Departments of Commerce and Treasury announce [first round of regulatory changes](#) to Cuba sanctions, implementing changes that Obama announced on December.
- January 20-24, 2015** [First round of diplomatic conversations](#) between the United States and Cuba. Roberta Jacobson, Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, travels to Havana to meet with Cuban officials
- March 31, 2015** [First formal conversation on human rights](#) between Cuba and the United States.
- April 11, 2015** Presidents Obama and Castro meet and have a [face-to-face conversation for the first time](#) at the Summit of the Americas in Panama.
- May 29, 2015** U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry officially [removes Cuba from the State Department's state sponsors of terrorism list](#).
- July 1, 2015** President Obama announces that the U.S. and Cuba will [reopen their embassies](#), almost 55 years after they first closed.
- July 20, 2015** The [Cuban embassy officially opens](#) in Washington, D.C.
- July 23, 2015** The Senate Appropriations Committee [approves three amendments](#) that would end restrictions on travel to Cuba, allow private financing for agricultural sales to Cuba, and lift restrictions on ships docking at Cuban ports.
- August 14, 2015** The [American embassy officially opens](#) in Havana.
- September 29, 2015** Presidents Obama and Castro meet on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly. For the first time in more than 60 years, [a U.S. president meets with a Cuban president on U.S. soil](#).
- November 18, 2015** Cuba and the United States [sign historic environmental pact](#) to protect nearby fish and marine life living off the coasts of both countries and to allow American and Cuban scientists to collaborate on research.
- November 19, 2015** U.S. [debit cards become available](#) to use in Cuba.
- December 16, 2015** The U.S. House of Representatives [forms the bipartisan Cuba Working Group](#).
- March 15, 2016** U.S. Departments of Treasury and Commerce announce [another round of regulatory changes](#). "People-to-people" travel can be carried out on an individual basis, authorized financial transactions are expanded, and Cuban nationals can open U.S. bank accounts. First direct mail service between the U.S. and Cuba starts.

- March 20-22, 2016** President [Obama and his family visit Cuba](#). A bipartisan congressional delegation and American business leaders join the trip. Presidents Obama and Castro hold a joint press conference. President Obama meets with Cuban dissidents, civil society organizations, and local entrepreneurs, and delivers a speech at the National Theater in Havana, which is broadcast on national Cuban television and radio.
- June 13, 2016** The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Cuban government [sign a MOU to encourage cooperation on health matters](#). They agree to work together on global health issues, including infectious diseases like Zika, and the medical challenges that come with aging populations.
- August 31, 2016** The [first U.S. passenger flight to Cuba](#) in over 50 years lands in Santa Clara. Secretary of Transportation Anthony Foxx is among the passengers on board JetBlue Airways Flight 387.
- September 12, 2016** The United States and Cuba hold [the inaugural Economic Dialogue](#) in Washington, D.C. Both delegations discuss trade and investment, labor and employment, renewable energy and energy efficiency, small businesses, intellectual property rights, economic policy, regulatory and banking matters, and telecommunications and internet access.
- October 14, 2016** The administration announces a [new set of amendments to the Cuban Assets Control Regulations \(CACR\) and Export Administration Regulations \(EAR\)](#). Notably, the new policies allow for joint medical research between U.S. and Cuban nationals, U.S. clinical trials and sales of pharmaceuticals developed in Cuba, and the importation of Cuban merchandise for personal use.
- October 20, 2016** U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia Burwell visits Cuba for meetings regarding infectious and non-communicable diseases. There, the two countries [signed a MOU on cancer research](#).
- November 8, 2016** Donald [Trump wins the U.S. presidential election](#).
- November 25, 2016** Fidel [Castro passes away](#) in Havana, Cuba. His ashes are entombed in the Santa Ifigenia Cemetery in Santiago de Cuba.
- December 6, 2016** The U.S. and Cuba hold the [fifth bilateral commission](#) in Havana. The talks are continued the following week in D.C., where the two sides reportedly “draw up a roadmap for deepening their détente.”
- December 8, 2016** Three major U.S. cruise lines, Pearl Seas Cruises, Norwegian Cruise Line, and Royal Caribbean Cruises, [receive approval to sail to Cuba](#) beginning in spring of 2017.
- January 12, 2017** President Obama [ends the controversial “wet foot, dry foot” policy](#) that granted residency to Cubans who arrive in the United States without visas. The policy had long been a source of grievance for the Cuban government, who saw the policy as encouraging Cubans to leave the island in an unsafe manner. The Cuban government issued a statement calling the policy change “an important step in the advance of bilateral relations” that will guarantee “regular, safe, and orderly migration.”

- January 17, 2017** U.S. State Department and Cuba [sign a MOU on law enforcement cooperation](#). The agreement outlines cooperation on security and criminal-related issues like terrorism, narcotics, money laundering, smuggling, and immigration.
- January 20, 2017** [Trump is inaugurated](#) as the 45th President of the United States.
- May 23, 2017** The Trump Administration calls for the [removal of two Cuban diplomats from Washington](#) in response to unexplained health issues experienced by some U.S. Embassy diplomats in Havana.
- June 16, 2017** [Trump unveils new Cuba policy](#), a partial rollback of Obama's rapprochement, at the Manuel Artime theater in Little Havana, Miami. "Effective immediately, I am cancelling the last Administration's completely one-sided deal with Cuba", said Trump. "We will not be silent in the face of communist oppression any longer." Trump announced two main policy changes: 1) Individual "people-to-people" travel would no longer be allowed; and 2) all direct transactions with Cuban military entities are now forbidden.
- July 17, 2017** Trump decides to [continue suspending Title III of the Helms-Burton Act](#). The provision would allow previous owners of Cuban property seized by the revolutionary government to sue for it in U.S. courts.
- August 9, 2017** The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cuba [releases a statement in response to the sonic attacks](#) experienced by US Embassy personnel. The statement ensures that the issue is being taken with the utmost seriousness.
- September 8, 2017** As Hurricane Irma approaches Cuba, Trump issues [a presidential memorandum extending the Trading With the Enemy Act](#) on the nation for an additional year, until September 14, 2018.
- September 19, 2017** In his speech to the United Nations General Assembly, [Trump vows to continue pressuring](#) what he called the "corrupt, destabilizing regime" in Cuba. "We will not lift sanctions on the Cuban government until it makes fundamental reforms," he said.
- September 29, 2017** The Department of State releases a statement in response to the so-called sonic attacks, ordering the [departure of all non-emergency personnel](#) (about 60 percent) stationed in the Havana embassy. A [Travel Warning advises US citizens against traveling to Cuba](#) as the administration does not have "definitive answers on the cause or source of the attacks and is unable to recommend a means to mitigate exposure."
- October 3, 2017** Secretary Tillerson announces the United States was [expelling 15 Cuban diplomats from their embassy in Washington, D.C.](#) in order to "ensure equity."
- November 9, 2017** [New regulations restricting individual "people-to-people" travel](#) to Cuba by requiring U.S. citizens to travel with and be accompanied by groups licensed by the Treasury Department take effect.
- January 30, 2018** During the State of the Union, Trump announces [Guantanamo will remain open](#).

- April 9, 2018** Former U.N. ambassador John [Bolton appointed National Security Advisor of the United States](#). Bolton is a staunch critic of the Cuban government and strongly opposes U.S.-Cuba engagement.
- April 18, 2018** Miguel Diaz-Canel is elected President of Cuba.
- May 25, 2018** Cuban flight 0972 crashes during takeoff at the Jose Marti international airport, killing 112 people. The [black boxes are sent to Washington D.C.](#) to be analyzed by the National Transportation Safety Board.
- June 1, 2018** The United States makes direct postal service to Cuba permanent.
- June 4, 2018** Eric Schmidt, former Google Chief Executive, and U.S. Senator Jeff Flake visit Cuba to [discuss a potential agreement between Cuba and Google](#).
- June 5, 2018** Following the discovery of similar symptoms in China, the [United States sets up a task force to investigate the cause of the mysterious diplomatic health incidents](#) in Havana and Guangzhou, though no punishment is levied against China.
- June 8, 2018** The [U.S. removes two more workers](#) from their embassy in Havana.
- June 10, 2018** [Cuban officials make a statement reiterating that the source of the mysterious sounds remains unknown](#) and characterize the U.S. response to the health incident as “politically motivated.”
- June 14, 2018** The United States and Cuba hold the [7th Bilateral Commission meeting](#). There, the U.S. emphasizes the importance of finding the source of the supposed “sonic attacks.”

For information on events regarding U.S. Cuba policy since June 14, 2018, please see the [Overview of U.S. Cuba Policy: 2014 to Present](#) section starting on page 4.

# CUBA LEGISLATION CURRENTLY IN CONGRESS

By Mavis Anderson. Updated on October 16, 2019.

While there are multiple Cuba bills in the current Congress, we are waiting for congressional initiative to take up, discuss, and pass these bills into law—a lethargy that your activism can help energize.

There is new energy around travel legislation in both the Senate and House, and potential for progress is real. What is needed now is your outreach to your senators and representative to get them to co-sponsor the bills. We hope you will help!!

Below we highlight a few standout bills. **Make sure to continue checking the co-sponsor links as new co-sponsors are being added regularly to each bill.**

## TRAVEL:

### Senate: S. 2303, Freedom for Americans to Travel to Cuba Act of 2019

Introduced by Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-VT), this bill, quite simply, would allow Americans to travel to Cuba like they would any other country, except North Korea, to which President Trump has banned travel by executive order.

The bill has **46 additional co-sponsors** – the vast majority of them being Democratic. It has been read twice and was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations on July 29, 2019.

### House: H.R. 3960, Freedom for Americans to Travel to Cuba Act of 2019

Introduced by Rep. Jim McGovern (D-MA) and Rep. Tom Emmer (R-MN), this bill is identical to the one introduced in the Senate.

With nine additional original bipartisan co-sponsors, the bill currently holds a total of **32 co-sponsors**. On July 31, 2019 it was referred to the Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Civilian Security, and Trade. Rep. McGovern's goal is to have 100 co-sponsors by the end of October. That is where we come in!

## EMBARGO:

### Senate: S. 428, Freedom to Export to Cuba Act of 2019

Introduced by Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), this bill would lift the Cuba trade embargo and eliminate the legal barriers to Americans doing business in Cuba, bolstering new economic opportunities as U.S. exports increase and Cubans gain greater access to American goods.

The bill stands at **four co-sponsors**. It was read twice and referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs on February 7, 2019.

### House:

We expect that a companion House bill will be introduced by Rep. Tom Emmer R-MN; and Rep. Kathy Castor (D-FL).

## **AGRICULTURAL CREDIT:**

### **Senate: S. 1447, Agricultural Export Expansion Act of 2019**

Introduced by Sen. Michael Bennet (D-CO) and Sen. John Boozman (R-AR), the bill permits a person subject to the jurisdiction of the United States to provide payment or financing for sales of agricultural commodities to Cuba or to an individual in Cuba.

As of now, the bill has **14 co-sponsors** is split almost right down the middle between Democrats and Republicans. After being read twice, it was referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs on May 14, 2019.

### **House: HR 1898, Cuba Agricultural Exports Act**

Introduced by Rep. Rick Crawford (R-AR), the bill would repeal only the restrictions on private financing and marketing that limit American export potential, thereby hindering U.S. competitiveness in Cuba's market.

The bill has **two co-sponsors** and was referred to the Subcommittee on Livestock and Foreign Agriculture on April 26, 2019.

<b>Bill</b>	<b>Leading Sponsor</b>	<b># of Cosponsors</b>	<b>Brief Summary</b>	<b>Current Status</b>
Freedom for Americans to Travel to Cuba Act of 2019 (S. 2303)	Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-VT)	46	Would allow Americans to travel freely to Cuba.	Referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations on July 29, 2019
Freedom for Americans to Travel to Cuba Act of 2019 (H.R. 3960)	Rep. Jim McGovern (D-MA-2) & Rep. Tom Emmer (R-MN-6)	32	Would allow Americans to travel freely to Cuba.	Referred to the Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, Civilian Security, and Trade on July 31, 2019
Freedom to Export to Cuba Act of 2019 (S. 428)	Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN)	4	Would lift the trade embargo and eliminate the legal barriers to Americans doing business in Cuba.	Referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs on February 7, 2019
Agricultural Export Expansion Act of 2019 (S.1447)	Sen. Michael F. Bennett (D-CO) & Sen. John Boozman (R-AR)	14	Would allow Americans to pay/finance sale of agricultural commodities to Cuba	Read twice and referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs on May 14, 2019
Cuba Agricultural Exports Act (H.R. 1898)	Rep. Rick Crawford (R-AR-1)	2	Would repeal only the restrictions on private financing and marketing.	Referred to the Subcommittee on Livestock and Foreign Agriculture on April 26, 2019

*Chart updated on October 16, 2019.*

# IDEAS FOR ACTION

## MEET WITH YOUR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

*At home in their local offices or in Washington, D.C.*

### BEFORE THE MEETING

**Make an appointment.** Simply call your congressional office and tell the staff member that you are a constituent and would like a meeting with your member of Congress. Tell them which issue you would like to discuss in person, and ask them when the staff person who works on the issue and/or the member would be available for a meeting.

**Gather a delegation.** A very effective tactic is to organize a meeting for a group of constituents who can speak from a variety of backgrounds on a specific issue. You will have a greater impact if you can demonstrate that not just a small segment of the population is sympathetic to your cause.

**Establish your agenda and goals.** Decide what kind of commitment you are asking for. Make a list of points and questions to be asked by each person in the delegation. Have an understanding of the member's stance on the issue you will present during the meeting. Select a group leader that will help facilitate and keep the conversation on track.

**Prepare materials.** For greater impact, prepare a packet for the meeting with materials such as: fact sheets from various organizations, supporting op-eds, editorials, letters to the editor or news items that illustrate your stance on the issue. Include the group leader's name and phone number so that your representative or senator can contact them for more information.

### DOs

- >> Do learn members' committee assignments and where their specialities lie.
- >> Do learn the members' voting records on the issue.
- >> Do identify the aide(s) that handle the issues and build a relationship with them.
- >> Do prepare a formal request letter to forward to the member's scheduler.
- >> Do have a rehearsal of the questions you want to ask during the meeting.

### DON'Ts

- X Don't take "no" for an answer when scheduling an appointment.

### GETTING TO THE MEETING

**Be punctual.** In Washington D.C., there are three Senate Office Buildings: Russell (SR), Dirksen (SD), and Hart (SH); and three House Office Buildings: Cannon (CHOB), Longworth (LHOB), and Rayburn (RHOB). Directories and maps can be found next to most elevators in all buildings.

### DOs

- >> Do ask a Capitol police officer if you are having trouble finding your way.

>> Do give yourself **at least 10 minutes** to get through security and navigate to the correct office.

### DON'Ts

X Don't be offended if you wind up waiting for your meeting—this happens frequently.

## DURING THE MEETING

**Be concise and diplomatic.** Keep your presentation short and to the point; name your issue, address the piece of legislation, and present supporting documents. Make clear exactly what action you wish for the member or staff to take. Be prepared to explain the amendment briefly and ask if the member needs more information. Ask what the member's position is on Cuba and why.

**Put a local and personal angle on the issue.** Stress why this issue concerns you and others the member represents. Cite local statistics, give examples of communities that will be most affected by this issue, and mention who supports your issue locally. It is important to be specific.

**Speak from your experience.** If you are meeting with your member's office on Cuba and have traveled there, share your story and the story of those you interacted with. You do not have to be an expert, bring as many facts as you feel comfortable with to the table.

**Press for a commitment.** Don't let your member of Congress evade the issue or change the subject. Ask specifically for his or her position on the issue. If they agree with you, ask them to co-sponsor legislation, make a floor speech, or sign a "dear colleague" letter on the issue. If they do not agree, ask the member what they would need in order to do what you want with the issue—it is key to follow up with the member on these concerns. If the office does not have a position on your issue or proposed commitment, ask them to get back to you within the next two weeks with a clarification of their position.

### DOs

- >> Do always assume that the person you are speaking with does not know about the issue.
- >> Do be specific on what you want the member to do.
- >> Do use reliable and factual information.
- >> Do show openness to knowledge of counterarguments
- >> Do admit what you don't know. Offer to find out and send information back to the office.
- >> Do spend time laying out your argument even if the member has a position against yours.
- >> Do stay on message.

### DON'Ts

- X Don't overload a congressional lobby visit with too many issues—one or two topics maximum.
- X Don't confront, threaten, pressure, beg, or speak with a moralistic tone.
- X Don't be argumentative; speak with calmness and commitment.
- X Don't overstate the case; understand members and staff are very busy.
- X Don't expect members to be experts.

## AFTER THE MEETING

**Thank your member of Congress.** And/or the staff member(s) for their time. Summarize the key points you made during your visit and include any information you promised to provide in a thank-you note.

**Provide follow-up information.** If your member asked questions, or was interested in a certain aspect of the issue, seize the opportunity and follow up with: a letter, fact sheet, phone call, or second meeting. If there is a vote, afterward give your member feedback—either thank them, or express your concerns if they voted against the amendment you were supporting.

**Continue to build the relationship.** A first visit should never be the end of contact. Make sure you or someone in your delegation stays in touch with the member and staff on the issue.

#### DOs

- >> Do keep in contact with the staffer as you receive new information or as votes approach.
- >> Do share the knowledge you learned on the member's position with organizations.
- >> Do continue to send materials whenever you see something interesting.
- >> Do remind your member to take your opinions, as constituents into account.

#### DON'Ts

- X Don't be afraid to follow up with additional information as soon as possible.
- X Don't simply push your own agenda. Provide information useful to elected officials.

## TALKING POINTS

*Special thanks to the Washington Office on Latin America for assisting with these talking points.*

### TRAVEL

- The **suspension of granting of visas for Cubans wishing to travel to the United States** because of the significant downsizing of the U.S. Embassy in Havana is causing serious hardships for many ordinary Cubans, keeping families apart unnecessarily. We request that you urge the administration to restore the embassy to its full capacity and resume the issuing of visas.
- The State Department's **travel advisory for U.S. citizen travel to Cuba** is also causing hardships for ordinary Cubans, significantly reducing the income of bed-and-breakfast and restaurant owners. Cuba is internationally considered a **safe travel destination**. The travel advisory and amended regulations make travel more difficult, resulting in a significant reduction of U.S. travelers to Cuba. We request that you urge the administration and the Department of State to rescind the travel advisory.
- Americans traveling to Cuba stay in private homes, eat at private restaurants, and **contribute to the growth of the Cuban private sector**.
- American travelers in Cuba provide an important **source of revenue for Cuban entrepreneurs**.
- 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 American jobs.
- Even **most political dissidents in Cuba agree** that ending the ban on travel and trade to Cuba will help encourage progress on human rights in Cuba.
- When diplomatic and official government-to-government ties are strained, **"people-to-people" interactions are more important** than ever.
- Cuba is the only country in the world Americans aren't allowed to travel to freely. Placing restrictions on American travel to Cuba is **out of line with American values**.
- Restricting Americans' rights to travel to Cuba, especially the ban on tourist travel, has **not helped the Cuban people** over the past 50 years.
- A majority of Americans (including **Cuban Americans, Republicans, and Floridians**) support unrestricted trade and travel to Cuba for all Americans.
- There is **bipartisan support for legislation** to lift restrictions on American travel to Cuba in both the House and Senate. These bills are good for American businesses and good for the American and Cuban people.

### AGRICULTURE

- American agribusiness continues to **lose market share** to the EU, Brazil, Argentina, and Vietnam due to current U.S. policies. The U.S. now ranks 5th in agricultural exports to Cuba.
- Cuba's agricultural **imports are expected to grow** as increased tourism fuels demand for food products, especially those of higher quality, and as remittances flow more freely due to U.S. policy revisions—all within the context of stagnant Cuban production.
- If Congress were to change U.S. policy on agricultural exports to Cuba, **U.S. exports would be more competitive** and able to recapture lost market share.
- Currently, **Cuba imports 60-80% of its food**, which amounts to about \$2 billion annually, creating a huge potential export market for American farmers only 90 miles off our shores.

## WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

*After returning from your trip, you might want to write a short op-ed and submit it to your local newspaper. This is a great way to both share your personal experience in Cuba and raise awareness for the need for policy change!*

### WHAT TO INCLUDE

**An opening.** Address your letter to the editor of the newspaper (if you do not know their name, “Dear Editor,” is ok). Begin your letter with a provocative hook to grab your reader’s attention. Make sure your opening statement makes it clear what topic you are going to be discussing in your letter.

**The issue.** Although you may have a lot of ideas that you want to discuss, it is extremely important that you focus on one topic. Briefly summarize the issue and explain its significance. You do not need to include every relevant fact on the issue.

**Your position on the topic.** Don’t be afraid to voice your opinion and make it personal; the whole point of publishing Letters to the Editor is to demonstrate various perspectives on a topic. Use persuasive language and feel free to mention any relevant qualifications or experiences that would help to legitimize your perspective on the issue.

**Evidence.** Even though your opinions are the heart of the letter, it is critical that your ideas are backed up by evidence. Use facts, numerical statistics, quotes, etc. to support your points. Don’t make any claims that can’t be supported and make sure to reference the source for any facts you provide.

**Your suggestion.** In order to use your letter to make an impact, it is important to offer up a suggestion. Your suggestion can be a proposed solution to the issue or it can take the form of a call to action, like asking readers to call their members of Congress.

**A closing.** End your letter by briefly (1-2 sentences) summarizing your most important points. Sign it with your name.

**Your contact information.** Make sure your email, phone number, and address are included at the top or bottom of the letter. The newspaper will not publish your complete contact information with the letter but they will need it to verify your identity and contact you before publishing the letter.

### HOW TO INCREASE YOUR CHANCES OF GETTING PUBLISHED

**Keep it short, clear, and focused.** Center your article around one topic and only include information that is pertinent to that topic. When editing, make sure every sentence is coherent and serves a purpose. Do not let the letter exceed 300 words.

**Make it original.** Try to provide a unique perspective on the issue; you are more likely to get published if your analysis or solution adds something new to the conversation.

**Be specific.** Avoid generalizations and be accurate. Ensure that any statistics, quotes, etc. are factually correct and come from legitimate sources. State the full name if you are referencing a person, group, piece of legislation, etc.

**Consider the timing.** If your letter is in regard to a general topic, try to wait until there is a related upcoming event, like a vote, before submitting it. However, if your letter is in response to a recent article or event, do not wait to send it in; if you don't submit your letter within a few days, it is unlikely to get published.

**Choose the right paper.** Remember that while bigger newspapers may seem more exciting, you have a much higher chance of getting your letter published in a smaller newspaper. Consider your audience when writing and personalize it to them by demonstrating why this group specifically should care. Make sure the language and tone of voice in your letter is appropriate for the paper's readership. Before sitting down to write, look over previously published letters to the editor to give you a sense of what they're looking for. Be sure to follow any specific instructions given by the paper about Letters to the Editor, such as the format, how to submit it, etc.

## HOLD A PUBLIC EDUCATIONAL EVENT

### FIND A SPACE

*Look for a public space such as a park, classroom, gym, or church. Ensure the location is:*

- Available (reserve, acquire proper permits)
- Appropriate (given the size, atmosphere, electricity, sound equipment)
- Accessible (consider disabilities, parking, public transportation)

### PLAN AN ACTIVITY

*Some ideas could include:*

- Craft posters and display them in public spaces.
- Write letters to policymakers. (See list of [Western Hemisphere Subcommittee members](#) in Resources)
- Send postcards to Congress.
- Lead a discussion on what the embargo and travel ban are and how they affect Cubans, Cuban Americans, and Americans generally.

### SPREAD THE WORD

*Once you found a place and determined what you want to do, make sure you promote your event. Here are some ways to spread the word:*

- Design and distribute a flyer ([sample flyer](#) in Resources).
- Create a Facebook event and invite friends and others in your area.
- Send out reminders the day before via email, text, or Facebook.

If you're planning a larger event and want to get even more publicity, you can:

- Invite local policymakers—their attendance will likely bring even more people to the event.
- Inform the local press ([sample press release](#) in Resources).

### FOLLOW UP

*Once you successfully wrap up your event, make sure you:*

- Post photos and videos on social media (e.g. on the Facebook event page)
- Send photos and videos to the local press.
- Invite participants to stay in touch via Facebook groups or email lists. This one event can serve as the start for future events to raise awareness and solidarity!

**Tip:** Use hashtags such as [#EndTheEmbargo](#), [#NoMasBloqueo](#), [#CubaSiBloqueoNo](#) when posting on social media platforms to increase visibility!

# RESOURCES

## STAY UP-TO-DATE WITH CUBA POLICY

- 1** Sign up to receive email alerts: [lawg.org/signup](http://lawg.org/signup)
- 2** Like our End the Embargo on Cuba Facebook page: [fb.com/endtheembargo](https://fb.com/endtheembargo)
- 3** Contact us with specific U.S.-Cuba policy questions: [lawg@lawg.org](mailto:lawg@lawg.org)

## RELIGIOUS LEADERS' LETTER TO CONGRESS

*The following letter was a joint effort by U.S. church and faith leaders. It denounces the Trump Administration's unwarranted travel advisory against Cuba and the suspension of issuing visas for Cubans to travel to the United States.*

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April 12, 2018

Dear member of Congress:

As faith leaders in the United States we write to you today with great concern about recent U.S. decisions regarding our Embassy in Havana, the suspension of visas and the State Department travel advisory. Our faith partners in Cuba tell us that these changes are causing serious hardships for many ordinary Cubans. We request that you urge the Administration to reverse these decisions.

As a consequence of mysterious and unexplained health issues reported by some U.S. personnel serving at the U.S. Embassy in Cuba, the U.S. Department of State ordered the departure of all nonessential U.S. diplomats from the embassy in Havana, Cuba. This has resulted in a suspension of virtually all consular services at the embassy. Cuban citizens wanting to visit family in the United States for emergencies, or connect with church partners, or attend faith-based meetings or assemblies, are unable to do so.

The suspension of visa processing within Cuba requires any Cuban citizen wishing to apply for a visa to do so at a U.S. Embassy outside of Cuba. The increasing costs and complications of the application process—which requires rescheduling interviews, obtaining visas for third countries, international travel, and paying to stay there for at least two weeks—have caused much anguish among our Cuban partners on the island and their families abroad.

Beyond the ordered departure, the State Department has also issued a travel advisory for U.S. citizen travel to Cuba, even though Cuba is internationally well-known as a safe destination, and trips for religious, educational and family visits are permitted under Trump Administration policies. The travel advisory and amended regulations however, make travel more difficult, resulting in a significant reduction of U.S. travelers to Cuba.

This has had a direct and negative impact on Cuban citizens, including those in the faith community. Many Cubans, taking advantage of new economic possibilities in Cuba, have opened privately-owned bed-and-breakfasts and restaurants, as well as other small businesses. With the downturn in U.S. travel, these private businesses have suffered a severe loss of customers and of income. Many of them have been forced to close.

Further, converting Cuba to an unaccompanied diplomatic post inaccurately and inappropriately ranks Cuba along with other unaccompanied posts, which include Iraq, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Sudan. This exacerbates the hardships experienced by our Cuban sisters and brothers in our partner churches on the island.

Religious freedom and religious life have grown dramatically in Cuba in the last two decades, and religious attendance – among Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Jewish and Muslim communities – has grown as well. The faith community is playing a greater role in the life of the Cuban people, and we look forward to its continuing growth and expansion. Policies that undermine normalized relations only serve hamper these steps forward. We strongly urge you to press the administration for the re-staffing of the embassy in Havana, the reinstatement of consular services at the embassy, and the removal of the travel advisory for U.S. citizen to travel to the island.

Sincerely,

Rev. Paula Clayton Dempsey  
Minister for Partnership Relations  
**Alliance of Baptists**

J Ron Byler  
Executive Director  
**Mennonite Central Committee U.S.**

Archbishop Vicken Aykazian  
Legate  
**Armenian Orthodox Church**

Jim Winkler  
General Secretary/President  
**National Council of Churches in the USA**

Rev. Teresa Hord Owens  
General Minister and President  
**Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada**

Rev. Dr. J Herbert Nelson  
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly  
**Presbyterian Church (USA)**

Rev. John L. McCullough  
President and CEO  
**Church World Service**

Dr. Timothy Tee Boddie  
General Secretary  
**Progressive National Baptist Convention**

Patrick Carolan  
Executive Director  
**Franciscan Action Network**

Lawrence Couch  
Director  
**National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd**

Diane Randall  
Executive Secretary  
**Friends Committee on National Legislation**

Rev. John C. Dorhauer  
General Minister and President  
**United Church of Christ**

Colin Saxton  
General Secretary  
**Friends United Meeting**

Rev. Dr. Susan Henry-Crowe  
General Secretary  
**General Board of Church and Society  
The United Methodist Church**

## WESTERN HEMISPHERE SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS

### HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Name	District	D.C. Office Address	D.C. Office Phone Number
Albio Sires (D) <i>Chair</i>	NJ-8	2268 Rayburn HOB Washington, D.C. 20515-3008	(202) 225-7919
Christopher Smith (R)	NJ-4	2373 Rayburn HOB Washington, D.C. 20515-3004	(202) 225-3765
Ted Yoho (R)	FL-3	1730 Longworth HOB Washington, D.C. 20515-0903	(202) 225-5744
John Curtis (R)	UT-3	125 Cannon HOB Washington, D.C. 20515-0919	(202) 225-7751
Ken Buck (R)	CO-4	2455 Rayburn HOB Washington, D.C. 20515	(202) 225-4676
Mike Guest (R)	MS-3	230 Cannon HOB Washington, D.C. 20515	(202) 225-5031
Francis Rooney (R) <i>Ranking Member</i>	FL-19	120 Cannon HOB Washington, D.C. 20515-0919	(202) 225-2536
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Gregory Meeks (D)	NY-5	2310 Rayburn HOB Washington, D.C. 20515-3205	(202) 225-3461
Dean Phillips (D)	MN-3	1305 Longworth HOB Washington, D.C. 20515-3205	(202) 225-2871
Andy Levin (D)	MI-9	228 Cannon HOB Washington, D.C. 20515-0919	(202) 225-4961
Vicente Gonzalez (D)	TX-15	113 Cannon HOB Washington, D.C. 20515-0919	(202) 225-2531
Juan Vargas (D)	(CA-51)	2244 Rayburn HOB Washington, D.C. 20515-3205	(202) 225-8045

## SENATE

Name	State	D.C. Office Address	D.C. Office Phone Number
Marco Rubio (R) <i>Chairman</i>	FL	284 Russell Senate Office Building Washington D.C. 20510	(202) 224-3041
Rob Portman (R)	OH	448 Russell Senate Office Building Washington D.C. 20510	(202) 224-3353
Ted Cruz (R)	TX	127A Russell Senate Office Building Washington D.C. 20510	(202) 224-5922
Cory Gardner (R)	CO	354 Russell Senate Office Building Washington D.C. 20510	(202) 224-5941
John Barrasso (R)	WY	307 Dirksen Senate Office Building Washington D.C. 20510	(202) 224-6441
Benjamin Cardin (D) <i>Ranking Member</i>	MD	509 Hart Senate Office Building Washington D.C. 20510	(202) 224-4524
Tom Udall (D)	NM	531 Hart Senate Office Building Washington D.C. 20510	(202) 224-6621
Jeanne Shaheen (D)	NH	506 Hart Senate Office Building Washington D.C. 20510	(202) 224-2841
Tim Kaine (D)	VA	231 Russell Senate Office Building Washington D.C. 20510	(202) 224-4024



# CUBA EVENT

WHAT:

WHEN:

WHERE:

MORE INFO:



Download at [lawg.org/CubaToolkit/Flyer](http://lawg.org/CubaToolkit/Flyer)

# SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

## Press Release

Contact:

John Doe, organization (if there is one)  
(555) 555-5555 | JohnDoe@email.com

August xx, 2019

## **Local Community Members Gather to Discuss Harmful U.S. Policy towards Cuba and Opportunities for Action**

[*City, State*]*—*On [DATE], community members will gather at [EVENT LOCATION] to discuss the current state of U.S.-Cuba relations and what ordinary citizens can do to support further engagement between both countries.

With this purpose, members of our community gather to raise awareness and stand in solidarity with the Cuban people. The event includes an open conversation about community members' recent trip to Cuba, the negative impacts of backwards U.S. policy towards the island country, and how we as a community can take action to change these policies.

*[You could include a quote from one of your members in the press release, urging a change in U.S. policy toward Cuba.]*

We urge our policymakers here in the United States to take concrete steps to dismantle the outdated and inhumane embargo against Cuba and end the travel ban once and for all.

Media attention is imperative in pressing our government to act. Join us.

Date: Saturday, August xx, 2019

Time: 0:00 pm to 0:00 pm

Place: [EVENT LOCATION], [full address]

## INFOGRAPHIC

In this time of uncertainty, it is more important than ever to understand real—not “alternative”—facts regarding public support for possible policy measures. To this end, we have created the *Support for Changes in U.S.-Cuba Policy* infographic. The infographic is divided into three main sections. The first displays opposition to the travel ban and embargo, specifically from Cuban Americans in Miami. The second section, “Obama’s New U.S.-Cuba Policies,” shows opinions surrounding Obama’s Cuba initiatives, most of which have been positive. Finally, section 3, titled “Economic Impact of the Embargo” discusses negative economic effects of the embargo and potential benefits of lifting the blockade.

Download at [lawg.org/CubaInfographic](http://lawg.org/CubaInfographic)



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This toolkit was created and formatted by  
**Andrea Fernández Aponte, Antonio Saadipour, Micaela Rostov & Mavis Anderson.**

AUGUST 2019