CUBA ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

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

DOWNLOAD ONLINE AT LAWG.ORG/CUBATOOLKIT

@EndtheEmbargo  @LAWGaction  lawg.org/signup
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, simply 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 And more importantly, our outdated and inhumane embargo against Cuba is hurting ordinary cubanos—keeping families apart, harming small business owners, and depriving normal citizens of basic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


Following 54 years 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, three years after this milestone was reached and the embassies were reopened, Americans and Cubans watch as this newfound relationship is tested and tried by the current administration.

Since 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, a great deal has changed for U.S.-Cuban relations. In addition to continuing to implement the embargo, promises made by NSPM include 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). Although Trump announced the rollback would be “effective immediately,” the arrangements did not go into effect until November 9, 2017, when regulatory amendments were finally issued by the U.S. Department of Treasury Office of Foreign Assets (OFAC), Department of Commerce, and Department of State. In the months leading up to this recent implementation, however, a lot more has changed for U.S.-Cuba relations.

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 American staff from the U.S. Embassy in Havana. In addition, the U.S. Embassy has stopped issuing visas to Cubans, refusing to refund deposits from previously submitted applications, and has 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 contradicts the State Department’s repeated statements that it does not yet know who or what caused the mysterious incidents. Both then-President Raúl Castro and Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla have strongly denied any involvement of their government and have made clear their willingness to work closely with the United States in the investigation. Could this dramatization of recent events work to simplify Trump’s efforts to achieve his campaign promise to roll back Obama-era efforts normalizing relations with Cuba? His eagerness to place the blame on Cuba’s government without the support of the State Department, and without an ounce of evidence, makes this jump seem plausible.
In addition to making diplomatic relations more difficult, the downsizing of both embassies slows tasks dramatically and leaves 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 U.S. embassy in Colombia or other Latin American countries in order to apply for a visa; this is implausible for most Cubans.

Furthermore, issuing a travel warning 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. It should be noted, however, that the travel warning is merely that, a warning. Some Canadian officials have suffered from the same incidents as American diplomats, but their government has refrained from withdrawing personnel and retaliating against Cuban diplomats in Canada, and has not issued a travel warning, as they believe there is no threat to tourists. No tourists are known to have been harmed in any way by the supposed incidents; nevertheless, the warning discourages many 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, student travel programs and others, such as the Smithsonian's, have not been permitted to carry out their programs in Cuba. The travel advisory is misguided and harmful, as there is no perceivable threat to tourists in the country. American tourism is a driving factor for Cuban economic growth and thus a limitation on travel, although unofficial, is detrimental to the Cuban people.

The Rollback in Action
Trump's restrictions towards Cuba are a hard step backward from the progress made. Nevertheless, some exceptions remain, which highlights the ineffectiveness of these changes to take on a full rollback. Although they are now in effect, those who made prior payments for part or all of their travel or business plans were permitted to pursue them, regardless of whether or not they complied with the new regulations. Therefore in practice, U.S. businesses already working with GAESA were not affected by the strict new regulations, and U.S. citizens who had paid for any part of their trip were allowed to carry out their plans.

There are still twelve categories under which Americans can travel to Cuba. Aside from eliminating individual “people-to-people” travel, these permissions go largely unchanged for the other categories that dictate family travel, official government business, journalistic activities, etc. Group “people-to-people” travel is still permitted and involves educational trips through U.S. organizations “that promote ‘people-to-people’ contact” and require the presence of a representative from the sponsoring organization. The license authorized as Support for the Cuban People is being 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.

U.S. travelers and businesses alike are now prohibited from engaging in direct financial transactions with 180 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. Already, 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.

These changes are by no means a full overturn of the progress that was made during the previous administration, but are nonetheless an unfortunate detour from the path towards normalization. The new regulations 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. While Trump stated in June, 2017 that the “easing of restrictions on travel and trade does not help the Cuban people,” Cuba's private sector boomed when restrictions were lifted and Americans were encouraged to visit, promoting immense economic growth.

It is clear that the embargo and travel restrictions that have defined the United States’ policies towards Cuba for the last 57 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. Trump's new regulations, both under NSPM and in response to the ‘sonic attacks,’ take the U.S. further from accomplishing this goal; nevertheless, it remains the most decisive factor hindering any attempt to normalize relations between the nations and promote the wellbeing of the Cuban people. After nearly six decades of enacting a destructive policy, it is time to end the embargo.
### TIMELINE OF EVENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 17, 2014</td>
<td>President Obama announces the <strong>beginning of normalization of relations</strong> with Cuba.</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 16, 2015</td>
<td>U.S. Departments of Commerce and Treasury announce <strong>first round of regulatory changes</strong> to Cuba sanctions, implementing changes that Obama announced on December.</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 20-24, 2015</td>
<td><strong>First round of diplomatic conversations</strong> between the United States and Cuba. Roberta Jacobson, Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, travels to Havana to meet with Cuban officials</td>
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<td>March 31, 2015</td>
<td><strong>First formal conversation on human rights</strong> between Cuba and the United States.</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 11, 2015</td>
<td>Presidents Obama and Castro meet and have a <strong>face-to-face conversation for the first time</strong> at the Summit of the Americas in Panama.</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 29, 2015</td>
<td>U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry officially removes Cuba from the State Department’s state sponsors of terrorism list.</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 1, 2015</td>
<td>President Obama announces that the U.S. and Cuba will <strong>reopen their embassies</strong>, almost 55 years after they first closed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 20, 2015</td>
<td>The <strong>Cuban embassy officially opens</strong> in Washington, D.C.</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 23, 2015</td>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 14, 2015</td>
<td>The <strong>American embassy officially opens</strong> in Havana.</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 29, 2015</td>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 18, 2015</td>
<td>Cuba and the United States <strong>sign historic environmental pact</strong> 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.</td>
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<td>November 19, 2015</td>
<td>U.S. <strong>debit cards become available</strong> to use in Cuba.</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 16, 2015</td>
<td>The U.S. House of Representatives <strong>forms the bipartisan Cuba Working Group.</strong></td>
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</table>
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.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 3, 2017</td>
<td>Secretary Tillerson announces the United States was expelling 15 Cuban diplomats from their embassy in Washington, D.C. in order to “ensure equity.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 9, 2017</td>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 30, 2018</td>
<td>During the State of the Union, Trump announces Guantanamo will remain open.</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 18, 2018</td>
<td>Miguel Diaz-Canel is elected President of Cuba.</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 25, 2018</td>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 1, 2018</td>
<td>The United States makes direct postal service to Cuba permanent.</td>
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<td>June 4, 2018</td>
<td>Eric Schmidt, former Google Chief Executive, and U.S. Senator Jeff Flake visit Cuba to discuss a potential agreement between Cuba and Google.</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 5, 2018</td>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 8, 2018</td>
<td>The U.S. removes two more workers from their embassy in Havana.</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 10, 2018</td>
<td>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.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 14, 2018</td>
<td>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.”</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
CUBA LEGISLATION CURRENTLY IN CONGRESS


There’s no shortage of Cuba legislation waiting in the wings—there are five bills alone dealing with lifting restrictions on travel and financial transactions and trade. But what is lacking is congressional initiative to take up, discuss, and pass these bills into law—a lethargy that your activism can energize.

Reminiscing just a few years back, the Obama Administration moved away from the historic and damaging U.S. isolationist policy towards a gradual normalization of U.S.-Cuban relations. This move sparked a new era of friendliness, loosening the travel, financial transaction, and trade regulations and benefitting both the American and Cuban people.

But with the change in administrations, came a shift in attitude and focus. Trump unveiled a new Cuba policy, intent on rolling back much of the positive progress of the years previous. And he played favorites and bargained favors with Cuba policy hardliners like Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) and Representative Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL).

So now, many bipartisan bills remain dormant, hibernating in the subcommittees they were referred to in early 2017. Yet, while Cuba policy is now stagnant, the potential for progress remains. Below we highlight a few standout bills and their potential for the future. See the chart for more information.

**House Agriculture Exports Act (H.R.525)**

Introduced by Representative Eric A. Crawford (R-AR), this bill looks to repeal restrictions on export financing, allowing U.S. firms to offer credit to Cuba in connection with exports of U.S. agricultural goods. It also gives U.S. producers access to marketing programs, which would help them compete in foreign markets, and eliminates restrictions to key federal funding used in financing exports to Cuba.

The bill has 65 cosponsors, including 43 Republicans, and was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs and to the Committees on Financial Services and Agriculture on January 13, 2017.

To help pass the bill, efforts are pending to include it in the 2018 Farm Bill, a bundle of legislation passed by Congress every five years that sets national agriculture, nutrition, conservation, and forestry policy. Whether or not this will be successful remains in question.

**Senate Agricultural Export Expansion Act (S.275)**

In a similar vein to H.R.525, this bill aims to lift the ban on private banks and companies offering credit for agricultural exports to Cuba. It was introduced by Senator Heidi Heitkamp (D-ND) and has 17 cosponsors.
While the bill itself has remained stagnant since it was introduced in February 2017, Sen. Heitkamp did manage to include a provision in the Senate’s version of the farm bill (the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018) that allows federal market promotion dollars to be used for agricultural exports to Cuba. The provision was adopted by voice vote in the Senate Agriculture Committee and on June 28, the Senate passed the bill. It now remains to be seen what will happen with this language when the bill goes to conference committee with the House.

**The Cuba Trade Act (H.R. 442)**
Reintroduced by Representative Tom Emmer (R-MN) and Kathy Castor (D-FL), this bill would allow businesses in the U.S. private sector to trade freely with Cuba, while restricting taxpayer funds from being used on the promotion or development of the new market. It would lift the outdated embargo and resume the normalization process between the U.S. and Cuban economies, promoting business opportunities that would benefit both countries.

The bill has 21 cosponsors and was referred to the Subcommittee on Trade on January 26, 2017.

At this point, the bill is idle in the House. However, Representative Emmer has successfully gained a significant amount of Republican support and remains enthusiastic about the future of the bill, casting a glimpse of positive light on the future of Cuba policy.

**House Travel Bill (H.R. 351)**
Introduced by Representative Mark Sanford (R-SC), this bill, quite simply, removes travel restrictions to Cuba. The bill has 13 Democrat and 13 Republican cosponsors and was referred to the subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere on February 16, 2017.

Despite having Republican cosponsors, Sanford has not actively promoted the bill among his colleagues, which has resulted in the bill’s general lack of support.

Rep. Sanford was ousted by a primary challenger on June 12, 2018 after Trump waged an extraordinary last-minute effort to defeat him. This means that the future of his travel bill is now even more uncertain, and a Republican sponsor for this legislation in the next Congress has not been identified.

**Senate Travel Bill (S.1287)**
Introduced by Senator Jeff Flake (R-AZ), this bill serves as a companion to the House Travel bill. The intentions of both bills are identical, although the introduction of each was different. Sen. Flake’s bill was released in the Senate prior to Trump’s Cuba policy announcement, thereby intending to completely and permanently remove U.S. travel restrictions to Cuba.

The bill has 54 cosponsors, a significant accomplishment, and was read twice and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations on May 25, 2017.

Although a viable bill, there remains difficulty getting the bill to the floor. As Sen. Flake is set to retire, there is no obvious or declared successor, making future advocacy for the next version of this bill uncertain. We hope that Sen. Flake will recruit a strong successor for his bill.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bill</th>
<th>Leading Sponsor</th>
<th># of Cosponsors</th>
<th>Brief Summary</th>
<th>Current Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Cuba Trade Act (H.R. 442)</td>
<td>Rep. Tom Emmer (R-MN-6)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>This bill would allow businesses in the private sector to trade freely with Cuba.</td>
<td>Referred to the Subcommittee on Trade on January 26, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Freedom to Travel to Cuba Act (H.R. 351)</td>
<td>Rep. Mark Sanford (R-SC-1)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Removes the current travel restrictions to Cuba.</td>
<td>Referred to the Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere on February 16, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Freedom to Travel to Cuba Act (S.1287)</td>
<td>Sen. Jeff Flake (R-AZ)</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Eliminates current restrictions on traveling to Cuba for tourist purposes.</td>
<td>Read twice and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations on May 25, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Agricultural Export Expansion Act (S.275)</td>
<td>Sen. Heidi Heitkamp (D-ND)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Lifts the ban on private banks and companies offering credit for agricultural exports to Cuba.</td>
<td>Read twice and referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs on February 2, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Freedom to Export to Cuba Act (S.1286)</td>
<td>Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Lifts the current embargo and allow more U.S. goods to be exported to Cuba.</td>
<td>Read twice and referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs on May 25, 2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Chart updated on July 2, 2018.*
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 of 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
2. Like our End the Embargo on Cuba Facebook page: fb.com/endtheembargo
3. Contact us with specific U.S.-Cuba policy questions: lawg@lawg.org
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 Cubans 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 to 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

Archbishop Vicken Aykazian  
Legate  
Armenian Orthodox Church

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

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

Patrick Carolan  
Executive Director  
Franciscan Action Network

Diane Randall  
Executive Secretary  
Friends Committee on National Legislation

Colin Saxton  
General Secretary  
Friends United Meeting

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

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

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

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

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

August xx, 2018

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, 2018
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
Support for Changes in U.S.-Cuba Policy

Recent polls demonstrate growing support for engagement with Cuba among American citizens.

1. Opposition to the Travel Ban and the Embargo Among Cuban Americans in Miami

**63%**

Oppose the embargo

**55%**

believe that the embargo has not been successful

- 90% Support the expansion or maintenance of business ties with Cuba
- 65% Support changes to the Cuban Adjustment Act

Decreasing Support for the Embargo

According to FIU Cuba polls, support for the embargo among Cuban Americans in Miami has been steadily decreasing over the years. The 2016 FIU Cuba poll is the first measure of the attitudes of Cuban Americans in Miami after Obama’s December 2014 announcement.

- **74%** Favor lifting the travel ban
- **69%** Favor the opening of diplomatic relations

Graph showing support trends from 1991 to 2016:

- 1991: ??%
- 1997: ??%
- 2004: ??%
- 2011: ??%
- 2014: ??%
- 2016: ??%
Traveling to Cuba

Polls show that an increasing number of Floridians want to travel to Cuba.

- **91%** Favor the elimination of all travel restrictions
- **37%** Would travel as soon as they believe Cuba is ready for Americans
- **19%** Would plan a trip for next year if the ban is fully removed

2. Obama’s New U.S.-Cuba Policies

President Obama’s Handling of Relations with Cuba

Since Obama’s announcement in December 2014, there has been an increase in support for the president’s U.S.-Cuba policies among U.S. citizens.

- **December 2014**: Approve = 44%, Disapprove = 36%, Don’t Know = 20%
- **July 2015**: Approve = 50%, Disapprove = 31%, Don’t Know = 20%
- **March 2016**: Approve = 52%, Disapprove = 30%, Don’t Know = 18%

Support for Normalizing Relations with Cuba in the U.S. Heartland

- **64%** IA
- **67%** IN
- **78%** OH
- **71%** TN

% of population in support of Cuba policy

Support for Specific Policies

- **President Obama re-establishing relations**: Yes = 68%, No = 32%
- **Lifting the travel ban**: Yes = 67%, No = 33%
- **Ending the trade embargo**: Yes = 58%, No = 42%

These are states with key congressional delegations that determine Cuba policy.

Americans remain supportive of renewed diplomatic ties with Cuba...

- **January 2015**: 63%
- **July 2015**: 73%
- **December 2016**: 75%

% who approve reestablishing U.S. relations with Cuba (2014)

... and ending the Cuban trade embargo...

- **January 2015**: 66%
- **July 2015**: 72%
- **December 2016**: 73%

% who favor ending the embargo (2014)
3. Economic Impact of the Embargo

The embargo costs American exporters more than $1.2 billion annually in lost sales.¹ (2015)

Since the policy began over 50 years ago, the blockade has cost $125.87 billion in damages to the Cuban economy.² (2016)

Effects of Lifting the Embargo³

- 6,000 new US jobs
- $365 million in additional sales to Cuba
- $1.1 billion in total economic impact

Sources:


