



October 9, 2015

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Senator Reid, Speaker Boehner, and Representative Pelosi:

As governors of states across the United States, we write to share our support for an end to current trade sanctions levied against Cuba. It is time for Congress to take action and remove the financial, travel, and other restrictions that impede normal commerce and trade between our nation and Cuba.

Since the Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act of 2000 (TSRA), which allowed for the first commercial sales of food and agricultural products from the U.S. in nearly half a century, Cuba has become an important market for many American agricultural commodities. Thus far, our country's agriculture sector has led the way in reestablishing meaningful commercial ties with Cuba, but a sustainable trade relationship cannot be limited to one sector or involve only one-way transactions.

Though U.S. food and agriculture companies can legally export to Cuba under current sanctions, financing restrictions imposed by the embargo limit the ability of U.S. companies to competitively serve the Cuban market. Our thriving food and agriculture sectors coupled with Cuba's need for an affordable and reliable food supply; provide opportunities for both our nations that could be seized with an end to the remaining trade restrictions. Foreign competitors such as Canada, Brazil, and the European Union are increasingly taking market share from U.S. industry, as these countries do not face the same restrictions on financing.

Ending the embargo will create jobs here at home, especially in rural America, and will create new opportunities for U.S. agriculture. Expanding trade with Cuba will further strengthen our nation's agriculture sector by opening a market of 11 million people just 90 miles from our shores, and continue to maintain the tremendous momentum of U.S. agricultural exports, which reached a record \$152 billion in 2014.

Bi-lateral trade and travel among citizens of both nations will engender a more harmonious relationship between the U.S. and Cuba, while providing new opportunities for U.S. interests to benefit economically from improved relationships. The benefits of fully opening Cuba to free market trading with the U.S. go beyond dollars and cents. This positive change in relations between our nations will usher in a new era of cooperation that transcends business. Expanded diplomatic relations, corporate partnerships, trade and dialogue will put us in a better position to boost democratic ideals in Cuba. This goal has not been achieved with an outdated strategy of isolation and sanctions.

While normalized trade would represent a positive step for the U.S. and Cuban economies, we appreciate and support the Administration's executive actions taken thus far to expand opportunity in Cuba and facilitate dialogue among both nations. We now ask that you and your colleagues in the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate take decisive steps to support U.S. commerce and trade relations and fully end the embargo on Cuba.

Sincerely,



Governor Robert Bentley
Alabama



Governor Edmund G. Brown
California



Governor C. L. Otter
Idaho



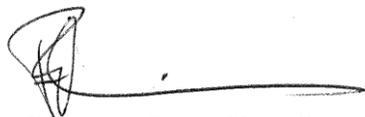
Governor Mark Dayton
Minnesota



Governor Steve Bullock
Montana



Governor Thomas Wolf
Pennsylvania



Governor Peter Shumlin
Vermont



Governor Terence R. McAuliffe
Virginia



Governor Jay Inslee
Washington