

Community Outreach: Changing U.S. Policy toward Cuba

An Organizing Manual

If you are reading this manual, you agree that the U.S. embargo on Cuba is both a moral and a political mistake. You know particularly that the restrictions placed on family travel and family contacts between Cuban Americans and their relatives in Cuba are inhumane. You don't need to have us recite the arguments (although we have some talking points attached that provide handy summaries of the arguments).

If what you want to know is what you can do to help change U.S.-Cuba policy, this manual is for you. It talks about why the United States continues to pursue such a bad policy toward Cuba, and what it will take to change that policy toward something that's better for Cuba and better for the United States. **Most importantly, it talks about what you can do in your community to help bring about that change.**

These materials are produced by the Washington Office on Latin America, and the Latin America Working Group.

The **Washington Office on Latin America** (WOLA) promotes human rights, democracy, and social and economic justice in Latin America, and monitors the impact of U.S. foreign policy in the region. For more than thirty years, WOLA has worked to inform and educate policy makers, religious and non-governmental organizations, and the general public. WOLA believes that U.S. policy toward Cuba has been misguided and counterproductive, and that engagement with Cuba is a more sensible, more effective, and more humane strategy for promoting human rights and social justice.

The **Latin America Working Group** is a coalition of more than 60 religious, humanitarian, grassroots and policy organizations that encourage U.S. policies toward Latin America that promote human rights, justice, peace, and sustainable development. LAWG provides reliable guidance to policymakers who want their decisions to be grounded in human rights. The LAWG's Cuba work, driven by the policy positions of its coalition members, continues to call for an end to the U.S. embargo on Cuba—for the benefit of both the U.S. and the Cuban people. The history of hostility between the two countries is obsolete and should be changed.

Please let us know if you have questions or comments about this manual. We are always interested in feedback that will help make the materials more useful.

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ANALYSIS & STRATEGIES

1. Most Americans Oppose our Current Policy to Cuba

Most Americans don't know a lot about Cuba itself. They don't know how its economy works; they don't know a lot about its political system or its human rights issues.

But Americans do know that we have followed the same outmoded policy toward Cuba for over 40 years and that it doesn't make any sense. Polls show majority support for changing our approach to Cuba. They show majorities in favor of letting Cuban-Americans visit their families freely and for ending the ban on all U.S. travel to Cuba. They show substantial support for restoring diplomatic relations with Cuba, and they show that many Americans believe that the trade embargo ought to be ended in its entirety.

Business and trade are interested in Cuba. A February 2001 report by the International Trade Commission found that the United States loses up to \$1 billion a year due to lost trade with Cuba. U.S. firms in the transportation and tourist industry, in construction, in energy, in the food industry and other sectors have all visited Cuba and expressed interest in the possibilities of trade with the island. Currently, under an exception to the U.S. embargo, U.S. farmers and agricultural exporters sell more than \$500 million in agricultural products to Cuba annually. Many farm groups are on record as supporting expanded travel and trade with Cuba.

Religious and academic institutions are interested in Cuba. The U.S. Catholic Church, the major Protestant denominations, many evangelical denominations, and a number of Jewish organizations have ongoing contact with church partners in Cuba. Most U.S. religious denominations support improving U.S.-Cuban relations. U.S. academic researchers travel to Cuba to study a wide range of topics, from plant biology to political developments; and until the Bush Administration cut back on licenses, many U.S. universities had study abroad programs in Cuba.

Many Cuban Americans are interested in opening up to Cuba. Until recently, Cuban Americans were permitted to visit relatives in Cuba once a year. Since the late 1990s, hundreds of thousands of Cuban Americans have taken advantage of this license and traveled to Cuba. Polls show that many Cuban Americans, especially younger ones and more recent immigrants, support easing the ban on travel to Cuba.

Congress has voted repeatedly to ease restrictions on travel and trade. In 2000, Congress passed legislation permitting agricultural sales to Cuba. In 2003, the Senate voted to stop enforcing the ban on travel to Cuba; the House of Representatives has voted four times since 2000 to stop enforcing the ban. Majorities in the Congress are clearly in favor of changing our policy.

The old security arguments in favor of maintaining the embargo are no longer convincing to members of Congress, many constituency groups, and the public. The Cold War is over, and Cuba is not backing insurgencies sympathetic to the Soviet Union in the Western hemisphere. In the new security environment, shaped by September 11th, Cuba just isn't on the list of real U.S. enemies. Cuba has no involvement with Islamic extremism; because it has experienced terrorist attacks itself, it's a strong opponent of terrorist activities. It doesn't have biological or chemical weapons, as Department of Defense analyses and other sources have repeatedly confirmed.

(Go to: http://www.wola.org/cuba/cuba_terrorism_allegations.htm for more information)

And while Cuba and its newly emerging allies in Latin America (such as Venezuela and Bolivia) are strong critics of U.S. trade policies and U.S. approaches to development in Latin America, and sometimes have strident rhetoric, they aren't threats to U.S. national security.

In fact, Cuba isn't a security threat at all. It's a potential market and trading partner, and most Americans think our policy is outdated.

2. If so many groups want to see change, why doesn't our Cuba policy get better?

The U.S. embargo on Cuba was imposed in the early 1960s, at the height of the Cold War. At the time, many U.S. foreign policy analysts saw Cuba as one front in a global struggle against communism. But the Cold War ended over a decade ago, and the U.S. struggle against the Soviet Union, and the states and organizations seen as its proxies, came to an end. Today, most serious students of foreign policy – including many who dislike the Cuban government and Cuban social and economic policies – recognize that the Cold War rationale for the U.S. embargo against Cuba has disappeared. As noted above, there are a great many reasons to oppose the embargo. It hurts U.S. economic and political interests, it hurts the Cuban people, and it has failed to achieve its own policy goals. Why then is the embargo still in place?

More than anything else, the answer has to do with domestic U.S. politics. As the foreign policy rationale for the embargo disappeared with the end of the Cold War, Cuban exiles and hard-line Cuban Americans forged a well-organized and effective special interest group that lobbies Congress and the administration, contributes heavily to political campaigns, and forms a key voting group in two states (Florida and New Jersey) that are critical to winning the Presidency. They have developed political power, and have exercised this power effectively.

Hard-line Cuban Americans have been major contributors to political campaigns, with a new PAC (political action campaign) recently formed. The top recipients of Cuban-American campaign contributions have been those policymakers who have fought the hardest to maintain or tighten the embargo on Cuba.

The power of the hard-line Cuban-American position also strongly correlates with their electoral role in two key states—Florida and New Jersey. Cuban-American voters are heavily concentrated in both of these states. Though they still constitute relatively small percentages of the electorate in each state, they can be an important voting bloc and a loud voice in key elections. Politicians of both parties who are in close races often feel that they must respond to the demands of this constituency.

It should be noted that the hard-line pro-embargo position does not represent the views of all Cuban Americans. While the hard-line position is the most vocal, and most well funded, there are many Cuban Americans who do not share those particular views. In fact, polls show that a growing majority of Cuban Americans believe the embargo should be eased and that Cuban Americans should be free to visit their relatives in Cuba.

While a major reason that the embargo has stayed in place is the political power of the hard-line Cuban-American position, two other factors are important as well.

First, while most foreign policy analysts believe that the embargo is an anachronism, there remains a great deal of hostility toward the government of Fidel Castro. Much of this hostility is a legacy of the Cold War era, when the U.S. foreign policy community saw Cuba

through the lens of Soviet-U.S. competition. Many U.S. officials remain viscerally opposed to the current Cuban government because of the attitudes that were developed in the Cold War era. In addition, there is ideological hostility to the non-market aspects of the Cuban economy, and opposition to the Castro government because it does not support an unconditional transition to a market economy. Finally, there is concern about Cuba's record on democracy and human rights. These factors combine so that policymakers, while skeptical of the embargo, are reluctant to take steps that appear to legitimate or accept a Cuban government that they dislike. This contributes to a certain "inertia" on Cuba policy, where policymakers do not formulate concrete proposals for policy change.

From the point of view of those interested in organizing for change, though, a key factor has been the pro-engagement forces are less organized and less vocal. We don't appear to care as much, and we don't fight as hard. With pro-embargo forces active, and policymakers quiescent, only a strong, politically-motivated constituency is likely to be able to effect change in U.S. policy. The elements of a domestic constituency have begun to emerge in the last few years. Religious and academic groups, Latin American advocacy groups, farm and business interests --- all of these have started to build pressure for change. But efforts have been less consistent, less coordinated, and less organized than those on the other side. Here's where you can plug in!

3. U.S. Travel Restrictions on Cuban Americans

Restrictions on Cuban-American Travel and Remittances to Cuba Were Greatly Restricted by the Bush Administration in 2004.

NEW RESTRICTIONS ON CUBAN-AMERICAN TRAVEL AND REMITTANCES

- Cuban Americans can now only visit family in Cuba once every three years. (And the rules are retroactive, so that people who visited relatives a year before the new rules went into effect and were planning to go back cannot return for two more years.)
- They can only visit immediate family members. Aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews and other extended relatives no longer count as family.
- There are no exceptions to these restrictions, even in the cases of an illness or death in the family.
- The U.S. government is limiting family charity. Cuban Americans can only send \$300 in remittances per quarter to people in Cuba, and remittances can only be sent to immediate family members, even if other relatives or friends are in need.
- Travelers to Cuba can only take 44 pounds worth of luggage per person to Cuba. This greatly limits the much-needed humanitarian items and other gifts that Cuban Americans can take to their families during their visit once every three years.
- Family charity is further limited by restrictions on items that can be sent in gift parcels. Gift parcels cannot include personal hygiene items, clothing, or other much-needed products. Gift parcels can only be sent to immediate family members.

WHY RESTRICTIONS ON CUBAN-AMERICAN TRAVEL & CHARITY MUST END

- **It is cruel to separate families, especially during family emergencies or tragedies.**
- **This is a humanitarian matter—it is wrong to limit family charity.** Remittances, gift parcels, and gifts during family visits improve the standard of living of millions of Cubans.
- **These measures break down family bonds;** the U.S. government should not impede or interfere in normal family interaction and relationships.
- **These measures force Cuban Americans to break the law** to maintain normal relationships with family members or give them needed assistance.
- **These measures place domestic political concerns over family and citizen rights.** These restrictions, as with all components of the embargo, are based on domestic politics and are designed to please hardliners in the Cuban-American community. The hardliners are not affected by these cruel measures, as most of them no longer have family on the island or have cut off contact with their relatives there.
- **These restrictions hurt Cuban Americans and Cuban families, not Fidel Castro.** These restrictions are contrary to American values and send a signal that the United States wants to promote political change in Cuba by increasing economic and emotional hardship for Cuban families.

THE CRUEL NATURE OF CUBAN-AMERICAN FAMILY TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

- U.S. Army Sgt. Carlos Lazo, who was stationed in Fallujah, Iraq, was unable to visit his sons in Cuba during his two-week leave from duty in 2004 because he had already visited them during the last three years. Sgt. Lazo has spoken out to members of Congress and the press about this grave and illogical injustice.
- Leandro Seoane was unable to visit his dying father or help his mother during his father's illness. After the death of his father, he was unable to attend the funeral or visit his grieving mother. He spent hundreds of dollars in costly telephone calls to speak with her during this family tragedy.
- These are just two of thousands of individual stories that put a human face on the cruel and ridiculous nature of restrictions on Cuban-American family travel and charity.

4. Education and Action for a New U.S. Policy: Reaching Out to Your Community

If we want to see change in U.S. policy toward Cuba, we need to organize our selves to be effective.

Foreign policies are made by the President and executive staff in the Department of State and other government agencies. They are funded, and influenced, by the Congress. While the opinions of citizens and community groups and churches and business groups don't automatically change the policies of an administration or the votes in the Congress, **educated and organized citizen groups can make change.** When we are organized and when we care, we can make a difference.

Public education about Cuba and U.S.-Cuba policy, pressure on the administration, and pressure on the Congress are all critical in bringing about policy change. But effective education and effective pressure depend on bringing together and making visible the diverse and powerful constituencies that want to see change in U.S.- Cuba policy.

Reaching Out to Local Constituencies

Those who favor maintaining our current policy toward Cuba are organized, passionate, and well-funded. Our strength, however, is in the range of constituencies that want to see policy change. Reaching out and engaging those constituencies in your local community is one of the most important things you can do.

Church Groups: The Cuban Catholic Church, most of the major Protestant denominations, and the Jewish community in Cuba have all condemned the U.S. embargo on Cuba for its effects on the Cuban people. National religious groups in the United States are also on record as opposing current policy. You can find the positions of most major groups on the WOLA and LAWG websites (www.wola.org or www.lawg.org) Use them to approach local churches, congregations, and temples. The priest, minister, or rabbi, the social action committee chair, and others in the community may respond with interest if you approach them with their denomination's own official position.

Universities—Faculty as well as Students: Universities and community colleges are often interested in speakers on international issues, and students are often interested in activist programs. But there are more opportunities than simply public speaking. Faculty who work on international relations issues or on Latin American studies should be approached about their interest in changing U.S. policy toward Cuba. (Most colleges' websites list faculty members by their areas of study and make it possible to get in touch with them.) This is especially worthwhile because recent moves by the Bush Administration have made it more difficult for faculty members to do research in Cuba, and for students to participate in study abroad programs there. These study-abroad programs have, in effect, been eliminated by U.S. restrictions. Both faculty and students have had their rights restricted and are often eager to act.

Local Business Groups and Chambers of Commerce: Because there is strong evidence that U.S. businesses are losing opportunities for trade with Cuba, many local business groups and chambers of commerce may be interested in the Cuba issue. National business groups, such as USA*Engage and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, have taken stands against sanctions on Cuba, and many national corporations have visited the island or talked to Cuban government officials about future possibilities. While Cuba isn't at the top of the business agenda, many business groups and officials may be interested in the issue. Cuba activists should approach local business associations and chambers of commerce about speaking on the Cuba issue, and activists should be prepared to make the arguments about potential business interest in better relations with Cuba. See the talking points on trade with Cuba that are included in this packet.

Farm Groups and Agriculture Associations: American farmers, farm groups, and agricultural exporters are all looking for markets abroad. Since 2000, they have been able to sell to Cuba, and Cuba has been interested in buying. The result is that the United States sells more than \$500 million in agricultural goods to Cuba every year. State agricultural missions have visited Cuba from Nebraska, Illinois, Kansas, Minnesota, North Dakota, and many other states. Many state Farm Bureaus are on record as seeking to expand trade with Cuba and to ease the embargo. The American Farm Bureau Federation has worked nationally with other farm groups and other allies to ease the trade and travel ban. There are real allies here for those interested in easing the embargo on Cuba. Activists should research whether farm groups in your state have traveled to Cuba, and reach out to speak to and work with farm groups.

Cuban Americans: While the hardline sectors of the Cuban -American community are the most visible, there are other elements in the Cuban-American community; and they are growing. Cuban -American moderates and those who want to visit their families without restriction are in every community and are becoming more outspoken. Through groups like the Cuban American Alliance Education Fund (CAAEF), the Cuban American Commission for Family Rights, or ENCASA (a coalition of Cuban -American academics and intellectuals), you should contact moderate Cuban -Americans in your community. Because they help combat the myth that all Cuban -Americans support the embargo, they are important potential allies.

5. Communities Taking Action Together

As you reach out to potential allies and local constituencies, you want to ask them to join you in simple but easy actions on which you can work together. Below are three simple suggestions.

Do an Educational Event Together. Most Cuba activists have given talks about their travel to Cuba, or about what's wrong with U.S. policy. But how many have put on a panel with several different constituencies? Ask your church, or your chamber of commerce, or faculty at your university to sponsor a talk. Then try to ensure that the speakers include people from several of your potential constituencies. You'll attract a larger audience, garner more media interest, and strengthen your own relationships if you put on an event about why both the religious and the business community want to change our policy toward Cuba, or why sectors of the Cuban-American community join with activists in calling for an end to the travel ban.

Write a Letter to your Local Newspaper Together: Most everybody, at some time or another, has written a letter to the editor expressing their opinions about Cuba. Maybe it got printed and maybe it didn't. What about writing a letter signed by people from different constituencies? A simple letter, noting that the ban on travel hurts Cuban Americans, church people who want to work with sister congregations, and business groups that want to send trade representatives, as well as all citizens who simply want to travel, can be signed by a range of organizations and individuals and sent to your local paper. We know that it's more work to get a range of people and groups to agree on and sign a letter than it is to write your own personal missive. But it has a much bigger impact.

Visit your Member of Congress or Congressional Candidate Together: WOLA and LAWG have worked to organize a number of meetings between diverse local constituencies and members of Congress. In one, a group of seven people from a farm state, including the principal lobbyist for a state-wide farm group, a Cuban-American academic, a church outreach worker, and several activists, visited one of their senators and several representatives. Their message was enhanced significantly by how broad a group of constituencies they represented. Yes, there is work involved in putting together a diverse delegation and in agreeing on the points you will raise, but the impact can be significant.

ORGANIZING -- ACTIVITIES & TECHNIQUES

Once you have done the outreach to constituencies in your community, there are a wide range of public education and outreach activities you can do that will build support for changing U.S. policy toward Cuba. Three examples: 1) Communicate with Congress and Congressional Candidates 2) Community Education and Outreach 3) Media Outreach.

1. Communicate with Congress and Congressional Candidates

Ask questions about their position on U.S.-Cuba policy at campaign events in your state.

By doing this, you can:

- Make candidates aware that U.S. policy to Cuba is an important issue to people in your state;
- Offer candidates the opportunity to publicly voice a more positive position on U.S.-Cuba policy; and
- Get local press coverage of people in your state raising the issue of Cuba policy with candidates.

Write letters to the editor about the Cuba policy issues in relation to congressional campaigns. Emphasize the support for change in Cuba policy and for improved U.S.-Cuba relations in your state to demonstrate that the issue is important to voters outside of Florida.

Emphasize the importance of family visits and reunification for Cuban Americans. It is a family values issue, in its most positive construction.

Contact your members of Congress

- Get 10 people in your district to call their senators and representative to say they want the House and Senate to end the ban on travel to Cuba NOW.
- Team with one or more people active on the Cuba issue in your area from other sectors (business, activist, religious, Cuban American, academic, etc.) and visit your members in their district offices.

2. Lobbying Hints and Tips

Your members of Congress owe their seat in Congress to votes from your district and state. Money matters far more than it should in American politics, and it may often seem that members don't listen. But members of Congress **do** pay attention to their constituents, and **you** can have an impact. Congressional offices count the letters they receive ON various issues, and **your action to send letter can have a direct effect on votes and actions.**

Most foreign policy issues aren't front and center for members of Congress. On a back-burner issue, even a small number of letters can make a BIG difference.

If you belong to a non-governmental, religious, grassroots or community organization, you can build a personal connection between your organization and your congressional offices on a set of issues that can significantly advance your cause.

Making effective phone calls to the Washington office of your members of Congress

1. Ask to speak with the staff person responsible for the issue. On foreign policy issues, this will often be the foreign policy aide. **If you know the appropriate staff person's name who deals with your issue, so much the better.** Give your name and tell the receptionist that you are a constituent (you will be more likely to get through to the aide).
2. Introduce yourself very briefly to the staffer, explaining that you are a constituent and, if you belong to a local organization concerned about this issue, add that connection.
3. Be specific about what you want the member to do. Don't just complain about an issue; say you want the member to vote for or sponsor a specific bill or amendment, or take a particular action, like sign a congressional "dear colleague" letter.
4. Ask what the member's position is on the issue. If the staff person doesn't know or won't say what the member's position is, ask what they, the staff person, will be recommending to the member. **Ask them to learn what the member's position is on the issue, and to get back to you with that information.** Thank them for their time.
 - ✓ Recognize that congressional staffers are often very pressed for time. Make your message **short and direct.**
 - ✓ **Be prepared to get voicemail.** Prepare a brief one or two sentence summary of what you want to leave on voicemail. Do give your name and contact information. You may want to ask them to call you back. If it's right before a vote, leaving your "plug" for the vote without asking for a call back may be sufficient.

Scheduling a meeting with your congressional office in D.C. or in your district

1. To make a meeting with your member of Congress or one of their staff, follow the same directions as above; but rather than telling them what you would like them to do over the phone, simply tell them which issue you would like to discuss in person, and ask them when they and/or the member would be available for a meeting to discuss your issue.
2. A very effective tactic is to organize a group meeting of constituents who can speak from a variety of backgrounds (academic, religious, business...) and ask for a meeting with the member himself/herself.
3. In order to schedule a meeting with the member, it is likely that you will be asked to fax a formal meeting request letter to the member's scheduler. This is normal procedure.

Tips on congressional visits

1. **Introduce yourself and your local community links** (groups associated with, member of a board, etc). Say what you want to talk about, which issue and piece of legislation.
2. **Find something to thank them for.** If they've voted right in the past, make sure to mention that (it is a good idea to know your member's voting record on the issue before you go into the meeting).
3. **Get the member or aide to talk.** Ask what the member's position is on the legislation and why. Do they support specific amendments? How will they vote? This will give you a framework to shape your dialogue and address their issues.
4. Often you might be talking about an amendment that the member doesn't know well. **Be prepared to explain the amendment** briefly and ask if she/he wants more information.
5. **Ask for something more and something specific.** Open with a specific request. If the member is already on your side, ask for something more. If the member is good on the issue, show her/him a list of needed representatives or senators. Ask which ones she/he knows well enough to ask to support getting favorable action on the amendment.
6. **Stay on message.** Don't be put off by smokescreens or long-winded answers. Bring her/him back to the point. Keep control of the visit.
7. **Speak from your experience.** If you are meeting with your member's office on Cuba and have traveled to Cuba or have heard a Cuban speak, share your story. You do not need to be an expert. Bring as many facts about which you feel comfortable to the table, but give stories from your experiences if possible. Don't stray from the real

facts, however!

8. **Present supporting documents**, such as relevant local editorials, denominational church statements, etc. Underline or highlight the most relevant portions of the document and reference the information as you hand it to the aide or member.
9. **Close the deal.** Get a commitment on your specific request. If you got a “yes,” then you are done. If not, ask what the member would need in order to do what you want. Then follow up on those concerns.
10. **Continue to build the relationship.** Relationships go through ups and downs, but they continue. Send a thank-you note. Keep in contact with the staffer as you receive new information or as votes approach. After the vote, give your member feedback—either thank her/him, or express your concerns if she/he voted against the amendment you were supporting.

Do's

- ✓ Do learn members' committee assignments and where their specialties lie.
- ✓ Do identify the aide(s) that handle the issues and build a relationship with them.
- ✓ Do present the need for what you're asking the member to do. Use reliable information.
- ✓ Do relate situations in their home state or district to legislation.
- ✓ Do, in the case of voting records, ask why the member voted the way she/he did.
- ✓ Do show openness to knowledge of the counterarguments.
- ✓ Do admit what you don't know. Offer to find out and send information back to the office.
- ✓ Do spend time even when the member has a position against yours. You can lessen the intensity of her/his opposition, or you might even change her/his position.

Don'ts

- ✗ Don't overload a congressional lobby visit with too many issues. One visit for one or two topics.
- ✗ Don't confront, threaten, pressure, beg or speak with a moralistic tone.
- ✗ Don't be argumentative; speak with calmness and commitment so as not to put the staff or member on the defensive.
- ✗ Don't use easy ideological arguments.
- ✗ Don't overstate the case. Members and staff are very busy.
- ✗ Don't expect members to be specialists; their schedule and workload make them generalists.
- ✗ Don't make promises you can't keep.
- ✗ Don't leave the visit without leaving a position or fact sheet in the office.

3. Local Organizing

There are many ways that you can organize locally to change U.S. policy toward Cuba. Local organizers play a key role in helping to educate members of the community, and community work with elected officials helps strengthen the democratic process, ensuring that officials' positions reflect the values of their constituents. While letter-writing and meeting with congressional offices are always good techniques, you will find other ideas for local organizing around Cuba policy below.

A. Outreach Tips (based on Midwest Academy Manual for Activists)

1. Getting people to join a group/coalition or sign up is the first step in getting them to help. Collect contact information for those who express interest in your issue.
2. Next, get them involved in an activity, not a meeting, as their first step. People are much more likely to remain active on an issue if their first experience is an event instead of a meeting.
3. Appeal to the reasons for which people seek involvement in an issue.
 - Issues that personally affect their daily lives
 - Professional interest in the issue
 - Moral interest (faith or social justice)
4. Make sure that people who are new to the issue don't feel like they are arriving in the middle of something that they don't understand. Start with the basics of the issue and make your intended goal clear.
5. "Agitate" them by conveying the severity of the problem.
6. Explain why their role as an individual is pertinent and critical to the issue.
7. Get each person to make a commitment to get involved. Make sure you FOLLOW UP with them. This is the #1 reason for which grassroots efforts do not succeed.
8. Try to continually put your issue out into the public eye. Ongoing activities are a good way to do this. (see ideas below)

B. Possible Community Actions

Host a speaking tour or teach-in. If you are at a school or university, ask educators to assist you and hold a public teach-in on U.S. policy toward Cuba. In your community, organize a teach-in at the town hall, a local place of worship, or another community space. While you may have speakers for the teach-in right in your community (if you or someone you know has traveled to Cuba recently, this is a great opportunity for a teach-in), there are also organizations that provide speakers and workshops. Contact **LAWG (202.546.7010)** or **WOLA (202.797.2171)** for information on how connect with organizations that could assist with hosting a speaker in your community.

Set up Cuba policy information tables at local cultural events related to Latin America. If a concert, dance performance, movie, or other special cultural event is coming to town, contact the event promoter and ask if you can set up a table at the door to hand out information and sign up new activists. If it's not possible to get a table inside the event, have people outside the doors of the event to hand out fliers and use sign up sheets on clipboards.

If you have a letter to send to a member of Congress, bring copies of the letter so that people can sign and send them right there. If you have a very cooperative promoter, ask if you can make a two-minute presentation before the event begins.

Set up a Cuba policy information table or have volunteers circulate with fliers and sign-up clipboards at regular community events such as farmers markets, flea markets, and street festivals. Again, if you have a letter to a member of Congress or other urgent action, make sure to bring them so that people can take action on the spot. These are opportunities to engage the local community with your issue.

Ask local activist groups that don't deal directly with Cuba policy if you can speak briefly at their next meeting. If you have local chapters of Amnesty International (Cuban-American family travel is a human right!), local immigrant organizations, and other groups that could have an interest in Cuba policy, see if you can come and speak to them about a specific action on which you are working. Most groups are more than happy to give other activists a few minutes to discuss a new topic.

Involve your religious community in advocacy for a more just U.S. policy toward Cuba. Lutheran World Relief has put together seven ideas for bringing work with Congress into your place of worship. Go to <http://www.lwr.org/advocacy/adviceas.asp>.

Hold a call-in day or letter-writing day in a local community space. This technique is especially useful leading up to a major vote: members of your community can voice their concerns over an up-coming vote in Congress relating to Cuba policy and ask their member of Congress to support a bill or amendment to help change the policy. To set up a call-in or letter-writing event, you'll need the phone numbers and addresses of your members of Congress (see www.house.gov and www.senate.gov), and talking points on the issue for a phone call or letter. You may also want a sample letter to guide the writers. For these resources and current updates, please sign up for the Latin America Working Group's Cuba Policy e-mail network at <http://www.lawg.org/>. You'll receive approximately monthly updates and action alerts relating to Cuba.

Organize a town or city council resolution. Across the country, states, cities and towns have organized council resolutions calling for a new U.S. policy toward Cuba. For example, the 77th Legislature of the State of Texas (2001) passed a resolution urging the Congress of the United States to remove trade, financial, and travel restrictions relating to Cuba. Your town or city council could do something similar. Again, Lutheran World Relief has put together a packet on organizing city council resolutions on Colombia, which are useful for raising Cuba policy issues also. See <http://www.lwr.org/colombia/docs/resolution.pdf>.

Hold a rally, vigil, or parade in front of your member of Congress' district or state office (you will need a permit, so be sure to go through the proper channels a month or so before you hold the event!). Amnesty International has some great tips on holding vigils and rallies as part of their Activist Toolkit. See their website at http://www.amnestyusa.org/activist_toolkit/planevents/ for this and other helpful information and creative ideas.

4. Media Outreach

A. Media Tips

If you want press coverage, you have to work with the press. Here are some useful tips, based on advice originally offered by a former White House Press Secretary, Joe Lockheart.

Build good relationships

- a. Rule Number One: NEVER EVER EVER EVER LIE to a reporter
- b. Return phone calls, even if it's to say "I don't know" or "no comment."
- c. Find out who covers your issue in the local media and introduce yourself to create a personal connection.
- d. Reporters are not your friends, but they are not your enemies. They are colleagues who should be treated with the professional courtesy that colleagues merit.

Political reporters are not the end-all be-all

- a. Every daily paper has an education reporter, or a health care reporter, or maybe an environmental reporter. Know these people and engage them.
- b. Don't forget about the editorial boards. These are folks who like to think of themselves as the "big thinkers," as policy-shapers. If you have an issue that isn't front-page material, maybe the editorial writers would like to chew on it.
- c. Alternative media do exist. Use them.
- d. Organizations have newsletters and websites

Be a resource

- a. Reporters love it when you help them do their jobs. Provide them with statistics, clear and factual information that they can use. Keep it concise.
- b. Include a human interest story ("real people examples") and provide local ties to the story, not just expert testimony.

Stories have inertia and reach a critical mass

- a. Look at Enron -- for weeks, despite the best efforts of some of the best spinners in the business, the Enron story languished on the business pages. Then, suddenly, it broke onto the front pages.
- b. Don't be afraid to "ride the wave." If you have something relevant to say about a building and developing story, say it. But don't overdo it. There's no need to be the guy who says something about everything.
- c. Reporters respect people who have a long history of dealing with issues.

Understand how the news business works

- a. Reporters have deadlines. Know what they are and respect them. Don't be surprised if you call your political reporter at 5:30 p.m., he/she won't want to talk to you. They're probably crashing to meet a deadline.
- b. TV doesn't work by magic. There are lots of technical issues involved, especially for small-market reporters. If it makes life easier for the TV or radio reporter for you to be "in-studio," then GO TO THE STUDIO.

- c. Hell hath no fury like a cranky reporter. If it can be avoided, do not schedule your event at 8:00 in the morning and expect great coverage. Reporters are not morning people.

Recognize that not everything is news

- a. This is hard to learn because it's important to you, and you can't imagine that it's not important to everyone else.
- b. Webster's defines "news" as "information previously unknown." If you are giving your standard stump speech, don't be surprised or disappointed if it doesn't make the front page.
- c. A reporter's job is to "move the story along." That is, to say things in a way that hasn't been said before. Recognize this and try to capitalize on it without abandoning your core message.

Preparing Materials for the Media

- a. Media advisories – for events. Always **include your contact info, a strong headline and keep in short. This applies to all materials for the media.** The text should be laid out clearly and should include the 5 “w’s”: who, what, where, when, and why. Don’t include too many details, that is why they are coming to your event!
- b. Press releases – for news. Make sure to include “news”, something that the reporter will not have already covered. Include the 5 “w’s” in your first paragraph.
- c. Op-eds – for your opinion. Write a substantive statement which covers the issue more broadly in order to appeal to a larger audience.
- d. Letters to the Editor – for your reactions. The most read section of the paper after the front page! Respond to any article or editorial written on your issue. Shorter letters with a strong but not abrasive tone have a better chance of being printed.

B. Possible Community Actions

Urge your local media to publicize OFAC (Office of Foreign Assets Control of the U.S. Department of the Treasury) regulations denying family visits to Cuba for Cuban Americans more often than once every three years, with no emergency exceptions, and only after applying to the U.S. government for a license to travel.

Write letters on this issue to the editor of your local paper about the issue, especially when articles about Cuba policy appear. See <http://www.lawg.org/tools/Media.htm> for media helps and hints.

Write a background memo on the denial of family visits, and send it to the editorial writers at your local paper.

Sponsor a community event to educate people about the issue. Use music, art, drama to attract residents and the press. See http://www.lawg.org/tools/organizing_locally.htm for ideas for community projects and events.

Organize a petition about the issue and send it to your member of Congress and to the local press. Bring it to your local mall, supermarket, school, churches, etc. to gather signatures.

BACKGROUND INFO: FACT SHEETS

End Cuba Travel Restrictions

The travel ban is a failed, outdated, Cold-War era policy. The current policy succeeds only in restricting the rights of U.S. citizens and hurting the Cuban people; it responds to the interests of a small group of hardliners in the Cuban-American community. It is time to create a U.S. policy toward Cuba based on sensible foreign policy objectives, one that benefits the United States and builds forward-looking relations with Cuba. Among the numerous reasons the travel ban should end:

- **A majority of American citizens want to see an end to the embargo on Cuba.** Polls show that a majority of U.S. citizens support trade with and travel to Cuba, a normalization of relations between the U.S. and Cuba, and an end to the embargo overall. Cuban-Americans and non-Cuban-Americans alike overwhelmingly believe the embargo has not worked.
- **Bipartisan majorities in the House and the Senate support easing the embargo against Cuba.** In 2003, the House voted 227-188 in favor of unrestricted travel and the Senate supported the measure by a vote of 59 to 36. It was the fourth consecutive year the House had voted to end the entire Cuba travel ban. Maneuvering by congressional leadership and extreme pressure from the Bush Administration has prevented embargo-easing measures such as these from becoming law, despite this widespread congressional support.
- **The travel ban hurts the Cuban people; it does not impact the Cuban government.** The strategy of starving the Cuban government by restricting U.S. travel is ineffective since millions of tourists from Canada and Europe visit the island each year. The Cuban government withstood years of far greater economic hardship after the fall of the Soviet Union than that caused by the new travel restrictions, so the only ones hurt by U.S. policy are the Cuban people.
- **Free travel would benefit American political and economic interests, and have a more constructive impact on Cuba itself than the current failed policy of isolation,** by promoting genuine people-to-people contact.
- **The travel ban is a waste of U.S. government resources.** Lifting the ban on travel to Cuba would allow the Treasury Department, which expends substantial resources enforcing these restrictions, to redirect its resources to its more pressing duties in the war against terror.
- **Travel restrictions are inconsistent with U.S. policy on citizen travel to other countries.** Restrictions on travel to Cuba continue, while allowing Americans the right to travel to other communist nations, including North Korea, China, and Vietnam. With the recent end to the ban on travel to Libya, Cuba is the only country to which U.S. citizens cannot travel without special government permission.
- **Isolating the people of another country is an unproductive policy approach.** President Reagan, for example, in the case of the Soviet Union, promoted free contact

among the peoples of both countries, and sought not to punish the people of either country for disagreements between the two governments.

- **Cuba is not a security threat to the U.S. or its citizens; there is no reason to ban travel there.** Several Bush Administration officials have charged that Cuba has “a limited offensive biological warfare research and development effort.” But the claim is misleading and the administration has provided no evidence for it, citing only Cuba’s advanced biotechnology sector. None of the reports by the Defense Department, CIA or other U.S. Government agencies list Cuba as a threat to the U.S. or other countries. According to former President Jimmy Carter, prior to his 2002 trip to Cuba, State Department and intelligence officials who briefed him assured him that Cuba posed no terrorist threat to the U.S.
- **An end to travel restrictions and increased U.S. travel to Cuba would expand demand for U.S. products, and help the tourist travel and airline industries.** U.S. economic output would increase by between \$1.18 billion and \$1.61 billion a year, if current restrictions on travel to Cuba were lifted, according to an independent study conducted in 2002 by The Brattle Group, a respected economic forecasting firm.

End Restrictions on Academic and People-to-People Travel to Cuba

Restrictions on educational travel to Cuba have been further tightened twice by the Bush Administration. Here's how:

- In May 2003, "People-to-People" educational travel to Cuba was eliminated. The people-to-people category of travel had allowed educational visits organized not for academic credit, but to allow interested U.S. citizens to see and learn about Cuba.
- In June 2004, the regulations were changed to require that all university academic exchange trips be at least 10 weeks long. For logistical and price reasons, most university exchange trips to Cuba had been just a few weeks long, such as a 2 or 3-week trip that would supplement an on-campus course on Cuba. As a result, all January term courses, condensed semesters in Cuba, and most summer courses were canceled.
- The new June 2004 rules also required that to participate in such a trip, the exchange program must be offered through the student's home university. Students were no longer allowed to register for exchange trips offered through other universities.
- These new rules led to the cancellation of 90% of the university based student study abroad programs to Cuba.

WHY EDUCATIONAL TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS SHOULD END

- **Travel for educational purposes should not be limited for political reasons.** Differences between our government and the government of Cuba should not be an excuse for limiting educational opportunities of U.S. citizens.
- **Limiting academic freedoms of our own citizens is counterproductive.** It doesn't make sense for our government to limit our freedoms out of concern about Cuba restricting the rights of its own citizens.
- **Students and ordinary Americans should have the opportunity to see Cuba for themselves and form their own opinions about the island.** U.S. citizens are permitted to travel to any other country of the world, no matter the state of relations between those countries and our government.
- **Only positive results can come from the free exchange of ideas.** Relations between the government of Cuba and the U.S. have been at a standstill for 45 years. Teaching, learning and the free exchange of ideas between Americans and Cubans, especially students and academics, can only have a positive impact on this negative situation. Yet our government seems afraid to let that interaction occur.
- **Travel restrictions prevent exchange and understanding between the two nations.** The travel ban limits opportunities to promote cultural understanding between Cubans and Americans and impedes improved relations between the two countries. Stereotypes could be dispelled and mutual understanding promoted.
- **Congress supports ending restrictions on educational travel to Cuba.** Congress has repeatedly passed amendments to overturn restrictions on educational travel and exchange which have been removed subsequently by congressional leadership before the final bills were sent to the President.

End Cuba Trade Restrictions

Sales of U.S. agricultural goods to Cuba are currently allowed under the Trade Sanctions Reform Act of 2000 (TSRA). But, **the embargo creates many impediments to these sales. U.S. farmers and companies selling goods to Cuba must:**

- Apply for a license for each sales-related trip to Cuba to market their products, negotiate sales and sign contracts.
- Request licenses for each of the products they want to sell to Cuba.
- Receive payments through third country banks. U.S. businesses cannot receive payment from Cuba for their products directly to their U.S. bank, but must go through a third country bank, with the attendant delays and additional costs.
- Apply for a license for each of the goods they want to ship to Cuba. **In addition, certain decisions by the U.S. government have directly hindered legal agricultural sales of U.S. products to Cuba.**
- Under U.S. law, companies must receive “cash in advance” payment from Cuba for each sale. A reinterpretation of the cash-in-advance requirement by the administration in early 2005 now requires that the payment be received by the U.S. company before the ship carrying their goods to Cuba has left the U.S. port. This replaces the cash in advance procedure that had been working smoothly up to this point. Under the previous procedure, the U.S. company received payment in advance of the physical delivery of the goods in Cuba. This seemingly fine distinction in the definition of cash-in-advance payment greatly complicates the sales: many more forms have to be filled out with the banks involved, delaying the process, and the banks charge more fees for these services, making purchases from the U.S. more costly for Cuba. For these reasons, Cuba has diverted some purchases of goods from the U.S. to other countries.
- **The U.S. government does not impose cash-in-advance payment requirements on international trade deals with any other country in the world.**
- In 2004, the Treasury Department denied permission for a U.S. agricultural trade show in Cuba. Previous trade shows resulted in millions of dollars worth of contracts for U.S. companies.
- The U.S. has denied or not responded to numerous visa requests for Cuban officials to travel to the U.S. to inspect and certain products (such as meat) to allow sales agreements to move forward. Such inspections are common practice in international trade.

HOW ENDING TRADE & TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS WILL HELP U.S. BUSINESS:

- **The embargo is bad for U.S. businesses and farmers.** The embargo greatly inhibits U.S. businesses from exporting goods to Cuba. A February 2001 report by the International Trade Commission found that the U.S. loses up to \$1 billion a year due to lost trade opportunities with Cuba. With the downturn in the U.S. economy and a suffering agriculture industry, restrictions on trade with Cuba limit the growth of U.S. industries.

- **Allowing Americans to travel freely to Cuba will create additional demand in Cuba for American products, and U.S. tourism in Cuba would increase the demand for higher quality U.S. food products there.** Current agricultural sales to Cuba, which in 2004 alone totaled nearly \$400 million, would increase substantially, benefiting American farmers, exporters and shippers.
- **Travel restrictions inhibit agricultural trade opportunities.** Unrestricted travel to Cuba will generate new revenue in Cuba and increase the amount of Cuban resources available for purchasing U.S. agricultural products.
- **These restrictions particularly affect small and medium businesses, such as dairy cooperatives and small farmers** that do not have the extra time and resources to expend on the complicated licensing and payment requirements.

Who Supports Travel to Cuba

Organizations That Support Travel to Cuba

Last updated 04/05/2006

Church and Religious Groups

American Friends Service Committee, Latin America and Caribbean Programs

American Jewish Congress

Catholic Relief Services

Chicago Religious Leadership Network on Latin America

Christian Reformed Church

Church of the Brethren, Washington Office

Church Women United, Executive Council

Church World Service

Conference of Major Superiors of Men

Episcopal Church, Office of Government Relations

Episcopal Peace Fellowship/ Cuba Interest Group

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Franciscan Mission Service

Friends Committee on National Legislation

Maryknoll Missioners

Mennonite Central Committee

National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA

Presbyterian Church (USA)

Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism

United Church of Christ

United Methodist Church, General Board of Church in Society

United Methodist Church, General Board of Global Ministries

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

Alliance for Responsible Cuba Policy

American Association of World Health

American Civil Liberties Union

Center for International Policy

Cross Cultural Solutions

Cuban American Alliance Education Fund

Cuban American Commission for Family Rights

Cuban Committee for Democracy

Disarm Education Fund

Fund for Reconciliation and Development

Global Exchange

Grey Panthers
International Action Center
Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO)
Latin America Working Group
Let Cuba Live
The Lexington Institute
MADRE
Marin Interfaith Task Force on the Americas
Minnesota Cuba Committee
National Lawyers Guild Cuba Committee
No War on Cuba Movement
Oxfam America
Pastors for Peace
Puentes Cubanos
San Diego Friends of Cuba
U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange
USA/Cuba INFOMED
U.S.-Cuba Sister Cities Association
U.S. Peace Council
U.S. Women and Cuba Collaboration
Venceremos Brigade
Washington Office on Latin America
Witness for Peace
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
World Policy Institute

Businesses/Trade Organizations

Alamar Associates
American Farm Bureau Federation
Americans for Humanitarian Trade with Cuba
Association of Travel-Related Industry Professionals
Common Ground Education and Travel Services
Marazul Charters
National Foreign Trade Council, Inc.
North Dakota Farmers' Union
Port of Freeport, Texas
USA*ENGAGE
United States Chamber of Commerce
US-Cuba Trade Association
US Wheat Associates

Unions

American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees

Prominent American Leaders

Dwayne Andreas, Chairman Emeritus, Archer Daniels Midland Company
Phil Baum, American Jewish Congress

Llyod M Bentsen, Jr., former Treasury Secretary in the Clinton Administration
Reginal K. Brack, Jr., former Chairman of Time, Inc.
Dr. Joan Brown Campbell, Chautauqua Institution
Frank Carlucci, National Security Adviser in the Reagan Administration
A. W. Clausen, former Chairman of BankAmerica Corporation; former President of the World Bank
Dr. Alberto Coll, Pell Center, Rhode Island (Cuban American)
Peter H. Coors, Chairman of Coors Brewing Company, Colorado
Francis Ford Coppola, Producer/Director
Mayor Michael Dow, Mobile, Alabama
Reverend Robert Edgar, General Secretary of National Council of Churches of Christ, USA; former member of the U.S. House of Representatives
Richard E. Feinberg, former NSC Chief for Latin America in the Clinton Administration
Craig L. Fuller, former Chief of Staff, George H.W. Bush Administration; National Association of Chain Drug Stores
Mark. O Hatfield, former U.S. Senator, Oregon
Carla Anderson Hills, former U.S. Trade Representative in the George H.W. Bush Administration
Bob Odom, Louisiana Commissioner of Agriculture
George Sturgis Pillsbury, Sargent Management Company, Minnesota
A. J. Pete Reizach, Director, Port of Freeport, Texas; former President, Gulf Coast Ports Association
Julius Richmond, former U.S. Surgeon General
Dennis Rivera, President 1199, National Health & Human Service Employees Union
David Rockefeller, Rockefeller Center Properties
Mark Sanford, Governor of South Carolina
Paul Schlesinger, former CIA Director and Secretary of Defense in the Nixon Administration
Kurt L. Schmoke, former Mayor of Baltimore
General Jack Sheehan, former NATO Supreme allied Commander
Sargent Shriver, Chairman of Board, Special Olympics International
Oliver Stone, Producer/Director
Paul Volcker, former Chair of the U.S. Federal Reserve Bank
Malcolm Wallop, former U.S. Senator, Wyoming
John Whitehead, former Assistant Secretary of State
Jim Winkler, General Secretary, United Methodist Church
Sylvia Wilhelm, Puentes Cubanos, Cuban American Commission for Family Rights