

KATHY CASTOR
14TH DISTRICT, FLORIDA

COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY AND COMMERCE
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OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS

COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET
REGIONAL WHIP



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0914

WASHINGTON OFFICE:

205 CANNON BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-3376

DISTRICT OFFICE:

4144 NORTH ARMENIA AVENUE
SUITE 300
TAMPA, FL 33607
(813) 871-2817

www.castor.house.gov

November 15, 2013

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20050

Re: Creative and Thoughtful Policies toward Cuba

Dear President Obama:

Last week, during your visit to the great State of Florida, you made several important statements about Cuba and U.S. policy. I commend you for it. You stated that we are beginning to see changes on the island thanks in some part to evolving U.S. policy. Everyone agrees that serious human rights concerns remain in Cuba that must be addressed, but the solution is more engagement, not the status quo.

It was important to hear you speaking from Florida about changes taking place on the island, the value of engagement, and the need to update policies that your administration inherited from the presidencies of Dwight Eisenhower and John Kennedy to reflect a dramatically different set of circumstances in our time. Your candor and, frankly, your political courage in expressing these views is a welcome departure from the past.

What you said about being “creative” and “thoughtful”, and updating our policies, is right on the mark. New circumstances demand a new framework for American policy. As you know, Cubans who are now free to start cooperatives and run their own small businesses are raising their standards of living, creating jobs for Cubans who are leaving the state payroll, gaining greater access to the Internet and, by selling less expensive, more efficient services to state enterprises are becoming fixtures in Cuba’s economy and social structure. All of this gives Cubans more control over their lives.

I saw these developments firsthand when I visited Cuba this spring, and when I met yesterday with Cuban entrepreneurs in Washington. They owe much of this success to family members and friends in the United States who have provided help and support. It is clear that the actions you took in 2009 and 2011 – on travel and remittances especially – are helping to spur these significant economic and social changes in Cuba. We are seeing bonds and

cooperation between citizens of the U.S. and Cuba that are fueling changes and that cannot be undone.

I strongly encourage you to take a fresh and more “in depth” look at the next steps in U.S. policy toward Cuba. The Tampa Bay community particularly is interested in assisting you going forward. New policy initiatives that are in our national interest and reflect our shared goal of encouraging positive change in Cuba will boost so many of my neighbors and provide Cubans with greater prosperity and latitude in determining their own futures.

Sincerely,



Kathy Castor
U.S. Representative
Florida – District 14

Cc: Secretary of State John Kerry