

Council Vice President Fielkow  
To Hold Panel Discussion on Potential Future  
Cuba - New Orleans Economic Relations

News Release

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New Orleans  
City Council

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New Orleans, LA - May 11, 2009  
- Tomorrow, the New Orleans City Council's Special Development Projects & Economic Development Committee will convene a panel discussion exploring how New Orleans can be prepared to renew and expand its economic relationship with Cuba in the event the United States trade embargo is lifted in future years. This topic is made even more relevant by virtue of the recently revised policy relating to travel to Cuba enacted by the Obama Administration.

The meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 12th at 11 a.m. in the City Council Chamber. City Council Vice President and Special Development Projects & Economic Development Committee Chair Arnie Fielkow has gathered a panel of international trade and policy experts to discuss the economic opportunities that increased trade and relations with Cuba can have on New Orleans.

"The historic cultural affinity between New Orleans and Cuba is obvious in our music, our food and shared ancestry for many in our community" said Fielkow. "It is important that New Orleans be ahead of the curve as it relates to future economic opportunities with Cuba and the rest of Central and South America. There already exists a significant economic history between our city and Cuba, and the future trade and economic opportunities are tremendous."

In 1958, approximately one third of all goods passing through the Port of New Orleans were destined for Cuba, which was Louisiana's number one trading partner in imports and number seven in exports.

Invited panel participants include Eugene Schreiber, Managing Director of the World Trade Center of New Orleans; Bobby Landry from the Port of New Orleans; Dr. Ana Lopez, Director of the Cuban & Caribbean Studies Institute of Tulane University; Randy Poindexter of the ForNorm Foundation; Buffy Donlon, businesswoman and founder of AlaCaribe Initiative, Inc. headquartered in Mobile; and Lisa Ponce De Leon, Director of International Affairs for the City of New Orleans.

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### WHITE HOUSE 'FACT SHEET' OUTLINING U.S. CUBAN POLICY CHANGES:

President Obama has directed the Secretaries of State, Treasury, and Commerce to take the needed steps to:

- Lift all restrictions on transactions related to the travel of family members to Cuba.
- Remove restrictions on remittances to family members in Cuba.
- Authorize U.S. telecommunications network providers to enter into agreements to establish fiber-optic cable and satellite telecommunications facilities linking the United States and Cuba.
- License U.S. telecommunications service providers to enter into roaming service agreements with Cuba's telecommunications service providers.
- License U.S. satellite radio and satellite television service providers to engage in transactions necessary to provide services to customers in Cuba.
- License persons subject to U.S. jurisdiction to activate and pay U.S. and third-country service providers for telecommunications, satellite radio and satellite television services provided to individuals in Cuba.
- Authorize the donation of certain consumer telecommunication devices without a license.
- Add certain humanitarian items to the list of items eligible for export through licensing exceptions.

Supporting the Cuban people's desire to freely determine their future and that of their country is in the national interest of the United States. The Obama administration is taking steps to promote greater contact between separated family members in the United States and Cuba and increase the flow of remittances and information to the Cuban people.

### Lift All Restrictions on Family Visits to Cuba

We will lift all restrictions on family visits to Cuba by authorizing such transactions by a general license, which will strengthen contacts and promote American good will. We will ensure the positive reach of this effort by:

- Defining family members who may be visited to be persons within three degrees of family relationship (e.g., second cousins) and to allow individuals who share a common dwelling as a family with an authorized traveler to accompany them;
- Removing limitations on the frequency of visits;
- Removing limitations on the duration of a visit;
- Authorizing expenditure amounts that are the same as non-family travel; and
- Removing the 44-pound limitation on accompanied baggage.

### **Remove Restrictions on Remittances**

We will remove restrictions on remittances to a person's family member in Cuba to increase Cubans' access to resources to help create opportunities for them by:

- Authorizing remittances to individuals within three degrees of family relationship (e.g., second cousins) provided that no remittances shall be authorized to currently prohibited members of the Government of Cuba or currently prohibited members of the Cuban Communist Party;
- Removing limits on frequency of remittances;
- Removing limits on the amount of remittances;
- Authorizing travelers to carry up to \$3,000 in remittances; and
- Establishing general license for banks and other depository institutions to forward remittances.

### **Authorize Greater Telecommunications Links with Cuba**

We will authorize greater telecommunications links with Cuba to advance people-to-people interaction at no cost to the U.S. government. This will increase the means through which Cubans on the island can communicate with each other and with persons outside of Cuba.

- Authorize U.S. telecommunications network providers to enter into agreements to establish fiber-optic cable and satellite telecommunications facilities linking the United States and Cuba.
- License U.S. telecommunications service providers to enter into and operate under roaming service agreements with Cuba's telecommunications service providers.
- License U.S. satellite radio and satellite television service providers to engage in transactions necessary to provide services to customers

in Cuba.

- License persons subject to U.S. jurisdiction to activate and pay U.S. and third-country service providers for telecommunications, satellite radio and satellite television services provided to individuals in Cuba, except certain senior Communist Party and Cuban government officials.
- Authorize, consistent with national security concerns, the export or re-export to Cuba of donated personal communications devices such as mobile phone systems, computers and software, and satellite receivers through a license exception.

### Revise Gift Parcel Regulations

We will expand the scope of humanitarian donations eligible for export through license exceptions by:

- Restoring clothing, personal hygiene items, seeds, veterinary medicines and supplies, fishing equipment and supplies, and soap-making equipment to the list of items eligible to be included in gift parcel donations;
- Restoring items normally exchanged as gifts by individuals in "usual and reasonable" quantities to the list of items eligible to be included in gift parcel donations;
- Expanding the scope of eligible gift parcel donors to include any individual;
- Expanding the scope of eligible gift parcel donees to include individuals other than Cuban Communist Party officials or Cuban government officials already prohibited from receiving gift parcels, or charitable, educational or religious organizations not administered or controlled by the Cuban government; and increasing the value limit on non-food items to \$800.

Click [here](#) to view News Release from the White House on U.S. Cuban Policy Changes.

### **New Orleans City Council**

The New Orleans City Council is the legislative branch of New Orleans city government. The Council considers and enacts all local laws that govern the City of New Orleans. The Council also approves the operating and capital budgets for the City, as recommended by the mayor, and continually monitors revenues and expenditures for local government operations. The City Council is also the regulatory body for public utilities. It also reviews and has final say on many land use and zoning matters, as well as considers major economic development projects for the City. As a Board of Review for Orleans Parish, the Council examines appeals of property tax assessments for real estate taxes, and certifies tax rolls to the Louisiana Tax Commission. Other responsibilities of the Council include overseeing the operation of the public access television in Orleans Parish.

The City Council is comprised of five districts and two councilmembers-at-large. Council President and Councilmember-at-Large Jacquelyn Brechtel Clarkson; Council Vice-President and Councilmember-at-Large Arnie Fielkow; District "A" Councilmember Shelley Midura; District "B" Councilmember Stacy S.

Head; District "C" Councilmember James Carter; District "D" Councilmember Cynthia Hedge-Morrell; and District "E" Councilmember Cynthia Willard-Lewis.