

U.S.-Cuba Trade and Economic Council, Inc.

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How Does This Advance The Interests Of The United States Business Community?

It's vulgar to dismiss the impact of DNA upon anyone's beliefs.

A Washington, DC-based self-described “grassroots” activist/lobbyist has in a statement to [The Miami Herald](#) introduced a particularly nasty, foolish and vulgar element by attributing the Republic of Cuba-focused policy positions of The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart (R- Florida) as solely the (by)product of a “family feud” with his relatives (above ground and below ground) who reside in the Republic of Cuba.

“Mr. Diaz-Balart is playing politics with his constituents’ healthcare in order to settle a family feud,” said James Williams, president of Engage Cuba, a group that advocates for closer U.S.-Cuba ties. *“Our U.S.-Cuba policy should be guided by what’s in the best interests of the American and Cuban people, not one congressman’s personal agenda.”*

How does this statement advance the interests of the United States business community in the United States Congress as those interests relate to the Republic of Cuba and for other issues of equal or greater significance in the United States Congress to the United States business community?

This individual has made the calculus that Representative Diaz-Balart, and by extension his relatives (and potentially his friends and colleagues), is an opponent of all, unavailable and incapable to consider, negotiate and compromise. How is this belief consistent with the following:

In July 2016, there was this statement in conjunction with legislative efforts by The Honorable Mark Sanford (R- South Carolina): “... a historic compromise” and “major step forward,” said Washington, DC-based EngageCuba, adding “reached an agreement to find a long-term solution to provide credit for the export of agricultural commodities to Cuba.” And who was among those Members of the United States Congress with whom a “long-term solution” was to be negotiated? Principally, Representative Mario Diaz-Balart. [See complete blog post below].

There are six members of the United States Congress who are of Cuban descent, five are members of the Republican Party and one is a member of the Democrat Party. As a group, they are generally consistent in their commercial, economic and political positions relating to the Republic of Cuba. United States companies generally oppose these positions.

The positions of the six members of the United States Congress are supported by The Honorable Paul Ryan (R- Wisconsin), Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, and The Honorable Mitch McConnell (R- Kentucky), Majority Leader of the United States Senate.... and potentially by the President of the United States.

How does magnifying differences, in advance of publication by the Trump Administration of its commercial, economic and political strategy relating to the Republic of Cuba assist in any meaningful manner of changing the distance between what United States companies may desire and what they don’t want to happen?

Issues relating to the Republic of Cuba are expressive of *personal* values, not only to Members of Congress who are of Cuban descent, but also to Members of Congress who are not of Cuban descent.

For those with connective DNA, the discussion is from the inside outward- which makes the journey so much more challenging and impactful and necessary. It’s vulgar to dismiss the impact of DNA upon anyone’s beliefs.

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In a perverse way, continuing friction rather than seeking agreement only serves to preserve existing statutes, regulations and policies... which means that “grassroots” activists/lobbyists continue to have employment. That should not be a strategy.

The Miami Herald
Miami, Florida
22 March 2017

Scramble for GOP healthcare votes suddenly puts Cuba policy in play

The showdown in Congress over House Republicans’ healthcare bill might have nothing to do with Raúl Castro — if it weren’t for Miami.

Thursday’s planned vote on the American Health Care Act is so razor tight that House GOP leaders and the White House are leaning hard on every single shaky Republican for their support. One of them: Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart of Miami, whose foremost want is to overturn the Obama administration’s Cuba opening — and who has recently taken it upon himself to outline a possible Cuba policy for the Trump administration. Perhaps Diaz-Balart and the White House would engage in a little old-fashioned horse trading — a “Yes” vote on healthcare for swift action on Cuba?

The New York Times reported Wednesday that Diaz-Balart wanted assurances from White House officials that President Donald Trump would keep his campaign promise to take a harder Cuba line. There was no explicit discussion about trading a healthcare vote for a Cuba promise, The Times said after initially reporting otherwise. “I wish that they would’ve given me a commitment on something, but that is just made up,” Diaz-Balart told McClatchy, the Miami Herald’s parent company, on Wednesday.

He added that he’s still undecided on the healthcare bill, mostly based on concerns about insurance coverage and premium costs for older Americans. “I am very concerned that particularly that population is not being dealt with yet in a way that is giving me a lot of comfort,” he said.

Politically, he noted, it’s better not to be a hard “Yes” or “No”: “Once I do that, then I’m out of the loop.” But there’s no denying that Diaz-Balart has brought up Cuba every time he’s had a chance to speak to the White House, where he’s closest to Vice President Mike Pence. And the Trump administration has spent two days openly wooing Republicans who, like Diaz-Balart, are on the fence about healthcare. (The Washington Post reported Wednesday that the bill lacks the votes to pass the House on Thursday.) Diaz-Balart was the tie-breaking vote approving the bill in the Budget Committee last week but has said he nevertheless leans against it. Diaz-Balart said Wednesday he hasn’t talked to Trump — but wouldn’t say if he’s spoken with Pence.

The suggestion that Diaz-Balart or the White House might even consider cutting a deal on Cuba to pass healthcare prompted immediate criticism from advocates of U.S.-Cuba engagement and from the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, which said the AHCA would “cost tens of thousands of his own constituents access to healthcare, blow the roof off of others’ premiums, and slap an age tax on older South Floridians.”

“Mr. Diaz-Balart is playing politics with his constituents’ healthcare in order to settle a family feud,” said James Williams, president of Engage Cuba, a group that advocates for closer U.S.-Cuba ties. “Our U.S.-Cuba policy should be guided by what’s in the best interests of the American and Cuban people, not one congressman’s personal agenda.”

The White House has yet to make any commitments on Cuba, a congressional source told the Miami Herald and el Nuevo Herald on Wednesday — in part because Trump has yet to appoint No. 2s at the State Department and National Security Council to handle Western Hemisphere affairs.

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In the absence of any high-level policy officials, Diaz-Balart has recently circulated a two-page memo to other Cuban Americans in Congress outlining a possible Trump approach to Cuba. The memo, titled “A Good Deal that Upholds the Law and Protects National Security,” has also been passed around the White House.

The memo lists no author, and Diaz-Balart’s office would not confirm Wednesday that he wrote it. Diaz-Balart, however, rattled off the same proposals — practically verbatim — in a November interview with el Nuevo Herald. Another congressional source confirmed Wednesday that the memo had come from Diaz-Balart.

The memo doesn’t go as far as calling for a return to restrictive Bush-era Cuba policy. Instead, it seeks to undo former President Barack Obama’s actions from December 2014, when he announced the reestablishment of diplomatic relations with the island’s Communist regime.

Cuba would get 90 days to meet criteria set by Congress in the 1996 Helms-Burton Act, including schedule free, multiparty elections, respecting political and civil rights, and making “demonstrable progress” on returning property confiscated from Americans or compensating them for it. Failure to do so would result in returning Cuba to the U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism, allowing lawsuits against confiscated Cuban property, and eliminating the October 2016 Obama guidance to federal agencies on normalizing U.S.-Cuba relations.

“The top priority is that sanctions must be tightened at least to those that were in place prior to President Obama’s changes announced in December 2014,” the memo says, in a line that is bold and underlined. “In addition to that fundamental change, President Trump has other opportunities listed here which together will generate a better deal for the American and Cuban people that furthers U.S. law and vital national security interests.”

Cuba- Last Week’s Mistakes By Members Of Congress/Advocates Could Hurt U.S. Companies July 12, 2016

<http://www.cubatrade.org/blog/2016/7/12/cuba-last-weeks-mistakes-by-members-of-congressadvocates-could-hurt-us-companies?rq=mark%20sanford>

Cuba- Last Week’s Mistakes By Members Of Congress/Advocates Could Hurt U.S. Companies Cuba Advocacy & Lobbying Can Be Effective.... Usually Ensuring More Next Year Failure Now Creates Revenue Opportunities For Advocates & Lobbyists 192 Days Remaining....

"There is real momentum," said The Honorable Mark Sanford (R- South Carolina), a member of the United States House of Representatives, last week. He then had no mention of the events of last week on his www.house.gov page as of 9 July 2016.

"...a proper path forward and we agreed to find a solution that does a number of things," said The Honorable Rick Crawford (R- Arkansas), a member of the United States House of Representatives, last week. He also shared *"a long-term solution," "thorough examination," and "deliberative process across each relevant committee of jurisdiction."* Representative Crawford then had no mention of the events of last week on his www.house.gov page as of 9 July 2016.

"... a historic compromise" and "major step forward," said Washington, DC-based EngageCuba, adding *"reached an agreement to find a long-term solution to provide credit for the export of agricultural commodities to Cuba."*

And, the organization’s president, Mr. James Williams, offered this to those who have opposed his efforts, *"their position is no longer tenable."* Is this a winning-votes strategy by a grass-roots organizer or a self-professed effective advocate/consultant/lobbyist?

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“...redouble its efforts with this Congress,” said Ms. Devry Vorwerk of the Washington, DC-based U.S. Agriculture Coalition for Cuba. Would this be the 114th Congress about to recess for the upcoming elections, with few remaining legislative days before formally adjourning in December 2016?

The government of the Republic of Cuba could not have been enthusiastic when their advocates engineered not one, but two, legislative failures within twenty-four (24) hours.

The result all but assures no legislation in the 114th Congress and simultaneously harms the foundations for advocacy in the 115th Congress- during which issues relating to the Republic of Cuba will again not be a priority for the leadership in either the United States House of Representatives or the United States Senate; or probably the next president.

Why are advocates focusing upon legislation when regulation and policy change are more efficient mechanisms by which to expand the commercial, economic and political relationship between the United States the Republic of Cuba during the remaining 192 days of the Obama Administration?

One reason, jobs- their own that is. Did the Members of Congress coordinate their efforts with the self-appointed Republic of Cuba policy advocates? If so, how should responsibility for the failures be apportioned?