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Who Might Influence The Next U.S. Congress On Cuba Issues?

The Next Months (Or Years) ...

After 6 November 2018, regardless of which political party controls which chamber of the United States Congress, the Trump Administration (with assistance from some members of the United States Congress) will continue to pursue commercial, economic and political policies and regulations designed to promote “*regime change*” in the Republic of Cuba. However, according to a senior-level official of the Trump Administration, “*the phrase ‘regime change’ will focus upon changing the behavior of the leadership of the regime as we are unlikely to replace those who lead the regime.*”

The Trump Administration’s term ends in 813 days...

Rules and policies for the United States House of Representatives tend to make easier inserting and retaining a legislative measure while rules and policies for the United States Senate tend to make easier preventing and removing a legislative measure.

Republic of Cuba-focused legislation is generally hostage to members of the United States Congress believing: **1)** a perception that the legislation will benefit the Republic of Cuba and **2)** a perception that the legislation will harm the Republic of Cuba. Both 1 and 2 are not necessarily mutually-exclusive to one another.

Legislative history has shown the Republic of Cuba to be a low-value commodity; to be traded away in most instances because it lacks importance. The legislative calendar is littered with Members of Congress pronouncing they would not permit legislation unrelated to the Republic of Cuba to proceed unless issues relating to the Republic of Cuba were resolved. In the end, no Member of Congress was going to seek to hold appropriation or other legislation of national importance because of the Republic of Cuba.

Prudent to remember that the last change in United States law relating to the Republic of Cuba was more than **6,575** days ago- nearly eighteen (18) years.

If the Republican Party retains control of the United States Senate: The Honorable **James Risch** (R- Idaho), will likely become Chairman of the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. Senator Risch was not supportive of Obama Administration initiatives relating to the Republic of Cuba. One member of the United States Senate remains the most influential Member of the United States Congress relating to the Republic of Cuba- The Honorable **Marco Rubio** (R- Florida). He is of Cuban descent. He is chairman of the Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Transnational Crime, Civilian Security, Democracy, Human Rights, and Global Women's Issues of the Committee on Foreign Relations of the United States Senate. He is thinking about the next opportunity to run for president of the United States; his first effort in 2016 having been unsuccessful. The second-most influential member of the United States Senate with respect to the Republic of Cuba is The Honorable **Robert Menendez** (D- New Jersey), who is also of Cuban descent. The third-most influential member of the United States Senate with respect to the Republic of Cuba is The Honorable **Ted Cruz** (R- Texas), who is also of Cuban descent. They represent three percent (3%) of the one hundred (100)-member United States Senate.

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If the Democratic Party gains control of the United States Senate: Senator Robert Menendez likely (should he be re-elected one 6 November 2018) will become chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations of the United States Senate. Senator Menendez was not supportive of Obama Administration initiatives relating to the Republic of Cuba. The Honorable **Benjamin Cardin** (D-Maryland) would likely become chairman of the Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Transnational Crime, Civilian Security, Democracy, Human Rights, and Global Women's Issues of the Committee on Foreign Relations of the United States Senate. Senator Cardin supported Obama Administration initiatives relating to the Republic of Cuba.

If the Republican Party retains control of the United States House of Representatives: The Honorable **Christopher Smith** (R- New Jersey) would likely become the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee; Representative Smith was not supportive of Obama Administration initiatives relating to the Republic of Cuba. The Honorable **Paul Cook** (R- California) will likely remain chairman of the Western Hemisphere subcommittee; Representative Cook was not supportive of Obama Administration initiatives relating to the Republic of Cuba.

If the Democratic Party gains control of the United States House of Representatives: The Honorable **Ed Royce** (R- California) chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the United States House of Representatives, who is retiring, would likely be replaced by The Honorable **Eliot Engel** (D- New York), the ranking Democratic member who was supportive of Obama Administration initiatives relating to the Republic of Cuba. The Honorable **Paul Cook** (R- California), chairman of the Western Hemisphere subcommittee would likely be replaced by The Honorable **Albio Sires** (D- New Jersey), the ranking Democratic member who is of Cuban descent and was not supportive of Obama Administration initiatives relating to the Republic of Cuba. The Honorable **Christopher Smith** (R- New Jersey) would likely become the ranking Republican on the Foreign Affairs Committee; Representative Smith was not supportive of Obama Administration initiatives relating to the Republic of Cuba.

An amendment to what is known as the “*Farm Bill*” is expected to soon be enacted into law. The amendment, authored by The Honorable **Heidi Heitkamp** (D- North Dakota), a member of the United States Senate (who polls indicate may lose her re-election effort on 6 November 2018), was made likely (and ironically) to be included in the legislation specifically due to efforts by Senator Marco Rubio. The amendment will permit United States taxpayer funds to be used for United States Department of Agriculture (**USDA**) programs managed by independent organizations for agricultural commodity and food product promotion in the Republic of Cuba. Senator Rubio added language to prohibit any of the USDA funds from being directed to any Revolutionary Armed Forces of the Republic of Cuba (**FAR**)-owned/controlled/affiliated entity.

The Office of Foreign Assets Control (**OFAC**) of the United States Department of the Treasury, the Bureau of Industry and Security (**BIS**) of the United States Department of Commerce, and the Office of Legal Adviser (**OLA**) at the United States Department of State will continue to be weaponized for use towards the Republic of Cuba.

A new Senior Director for Western Hemisphere Affairs at the National Security Council (**NSC**) in The White House is The Honorable **Mauricio Claver-Carone**, a highly competent and skilled political operative... who is of Cuban descent. His role in shaping the United States relationship with the Republic of Cuba and his relationships with members of the United States Congress should not be undervalued and ignored at one’s peril.