

Opportunities for the Biden Administration to Reverse Failed Trump Policy On Cuba – Part 1

Article By:

Emily P. Grim

Janet Sanchez

Potentially no country has more to gain from a new U.S. presidential administration than Cuba. President Trump has spent the last four years ratcheting up sanctions on Cuba and rolling back prior efforts to normalize relations in an effort to cripple the Cuban government and force a regime change.

Whether President Biden will return to Obama-era levels of engagement with Cuba remains to be seen. However, he has made his disapproval of the Trump administration's isolationist policies clear.

Our many years of diverse experience in Cuba—legal, commercial, political—all point us to one conclusion: deeper connections are desirable, important, and eminently doable. In today's blogpost, we offer two proposals to improve family and economic connections; in Part 2, we will offer proposals related to legal and bilateral concerns.

Restore remittances to Obama-era levels.

The Trump administration has placed severe restrictions on U.S. remittances to Cuba. In September 2019, the Treasury Department imposed a \$1,000 cap on previously unlimited family remittances and prohibited donative remittances altogether. Most recently, on October 27, 2020, the Treasury Department prohibited, effective November 26, remittances sent through FINCIMEX, the Cuban government-controlled entity that serves as an agent of Western Union—effectively extinguishing the ability of many U.S. citizens to send remittances to family in Cuba.

U.S. remittances represent a vital lifeline for many Cubans, including those struggling to establish private businesses. Loosening these restrictions is consistent with the objectives of providing humanitarian support to the Cuban people and fostering the private economy, and thus is well within the President's executive authority.

Reinstate authorizations for non-family travel.

In June 2019, the Treasury Department eliminated people-to-people educational travel as a permitted

category of travel to Cuba, and the Commerce Department reduced commercial flights and prohibited cruises to the island. These restrictions severely reduced the flow of U.S. visitors to Cuba and gutted Cuba's burgeoning private hospitality and dining sector.

President Biden has committed publicly to easing travel restrictions to Cuba, stating in a February 2020 [interview](#) that Americans are the best ambassadors for freedom in Cuba. Given that increased U.S. presence on the island and support of the private sector are consistent with U.S. policy objectives toward Cuba, Biden may loosen these restrictions via executive action, without Congressional approval.

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