

just for being here and kind of sharing your stories, because I think it is very important that we hear the stories of Americans who have had relationships with Cuban people who really don't and can't figure out why everyone can't have these normal relations with the people of Cuba as we do with people around the world. So thank you again very much.

I now yield to the gentlewoman from Connecticut, Congresswoman DELAURO, who has visited Cuba several times, who really has been very focused on the business aspects, the agricultural benefits to our own country and to Cuba as they relate to ending the embargo, also on women's issues and so many issues that really require us to normalize relations with Cuba. She has been in this fight a long time and still continues each and every day to move us forward.

I really thank you again for your leadership, for being here and for being with some of us when we have been in Cuba and really raising these issues to a level that really, I think the Cuban people understand that Americans are spirited and they really want to be there and to help move Cuba forward as well as our own country forward. So thank you again.

□ 1645

Ms. DELAURO. I want to thank the gentlewoman, first and foremost, for her leadership. This is not an issue for the faint of heart or for people who want to say, "Oh, my gosh. If we don't see success immediately, then we will wash our hands and go off and do some other thing." This has required tenacity and courage and passion and deep concern. We are grateful to you for your leadership in this area, and it has been a pleasure for me to work with you.

Mr. Speaker, like my colleagues, we are no fans of the Castro regime. This is not about the regime. It is about the Cuban people and what we can do to help our near neighbors realize their aspirations for freedom and prosperity. Judged against that worthy goal, our policy for the last 54 years has been a dismal failure. It has not helped ordinary Cubans one bit. In fact, the sanctions have harmed them and us by holding back Cuba's democratic and economic development.

Back in 2007, I had the opportunity to chair the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee. At that time, I led a bipartisan group of Members on a trip to Cuba. On that trip, it was so interesting to me that one of the things that one or two of my colleagues—and, again, in a bipartisan way—wanted to do was to go to the port and see the off-loading of rice. The fact of the matter is that, instead of getting their rice from the United States, which Cuba could do, they are getting their rice from Malaysia. Imagine if we could make an economic difference for our rice farmers, for our agricultural community, and because of a policy that

has been so shortsighted, we are putting our own economic interests aside.

I had the honor of taking part in another delegation to the island last year, led by our colleague BARBARA LEE. What we saw on the visit was an immense and an untapped potential. It was at that time as well that I accompanied Congresswoman LEE to visit with Alan Gross and to understand his plight. He was arrested and put in prison for 15 years, having served 5 years. What destruction it was doing to him physically and mentally, and unnecessarily so. We were so excited yesterday, when we were sworn in as newly elected or just elected Members of Congress, that Alan Gross and his wife, Judy, were in the audience to see it—back home, here, in the United States, with family, and enjoying all of the freedom that he deserves. Again, the immense benefits, the untapped potential.

We also saw and met—and my colleague BARBARA LEE will bear this out—with entrepreneurs. There are many young women who have opened stores; they have opened restaurants; they have opened other small businesses. We spoke with people who are finding innovative ways to improve their lives and the lives of their families; yet, because of a lack of a financial infrastructure or the ability of U.S. banks to participate in Cuba, they are held to a modicum of what they can do.

There is palpable hunger for change in Cuba. We need to do our best to support it. Opening the economy will help to unleash the entrepreneurial spirit of the Cuban people. We have engaged with the Soviet Union and Communist China, both of which pose potentially severe threats to our country. Cuba poses no such threat.

I applaud the President for his historic first step to normalize relations between the United States and Cuba. We must stop persevering in a senseless cold war policy. This Congress must act to end this embargo.

I thank the gentlewoman for the time.

Mr. Speaker, like my colleagues, I am no fan of the Castro regime. But this is not about the regime. It is about the Cuban people, and what we can do to help our near neighbors realize their aspirations for freedom and prosperity.

Judged against that worthy goal, our policy of the last fifty-four years has been a dismal failure. It has not helped ordinary Cubans one bit. In fact, the sanctions have harmed them—and us—by holding back Cuba's democratic and economic development.

Back in 2007, when I chaired the Agriculture appropriations subcommittee, I led a bipartisan group of members on a trip to Cuba. This year, I took part in another delegation to the island. What we saw on both visits was immense untapped potential.

I met entrepreneurs who have opened stores, restaurants, and other small businesses. I spoke with people finding innovative ways to improve their lives and the lives of their families.

There is a palpable hunger for change in Cuba. We should do our best to support it.

Opening the economy will help unleash the entrepreneurial spirit of the Cuban people.

We engaged with the Soviet Union and Communist China, both of which posed potentially severe threats to our country. Cuba poses no such threat. Stonewalling the Cuban government only backs up the regime's claim that the United States is the enemy. By contrast, engaging diplomatically gives us the openings we need to address important issues like democracy and human rights, as we have done with China and many other countries.

So I applaud the President for his historic first step to normalize relations between the United States and Cuba. This new direction will benefit both nations. The President has done a great deal, within the confines of his available powers, to reestablish diplomatic relations, increase commerce, and advance shared humanitarian interests.

There is more he can do: for example, he should do away with a Bush Administration policy that drains Cuban talent by encouraging doctors to defect.

But lifting the embargo itself will require Congress to act. I have been arguing for an end to sanctions for many years. The Cuban people have suffered needlessly for too long. We ought to free them to join the international community and participate in the global economy. For our own businesses, lifting the embargo would ensure access to new markets just 90 miles from our shores.

I am in favor of re-establishing formal diplomatic relations with Cuba. But our best ambassadors would be the American people themselves. Every American should have the right to travel freely to Cuba. The resulting flood of contact would give Cubans access to America's most valuable export: our nation's ideals and values. That is the surest path to freedom for the Cuban people.

We must stop persevering this senseless Cold War policy. Congress must act to end this embargo.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

#### ADJOURNMENT

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 4 o'clock and 50 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, January 8, 2015, at 10 a.m. for morning-hour debate.

#### EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 2 of rule XIV, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

4. A letter from the Assistant Attorney General, Office of Legislative Affairs, Department of Justice, transmitting the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act Annual Report for 2014, pursuant to 52 U.S.C. 20301 to 20311; to the Committee on House Administration.

5. A letter from the Chief, Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's IRB only rule—Changes to Employee Plans Determination Letter Processing (Announcement 2015-1) received January 5, 2015, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Ways and Means.