

A BETTER POLICY TOWARD CUBA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Madam Speaker, our policy toward Cuba should be one area where Democrats and Republicans can find common ground.

There are not many communist countries left, but let's consider that, when it came to the old Soviet bloc or China and Vietnam today, we have agreed on the basics. We all differ with their human rights practices, and we say so.

We stand up for our security interests. We cooperate when we can. We support trade and citizen contact because they are good for our economy and they increase our influence.

In this vein, let me praise a few Republicans:

President Nixon for the opening to China;

President Ford for the Helsinki Accords and the principle that people and information should flow freely across borders;

President Reagan for vastly expanding engagement with the Soviet Union and its people.

These are big achievements, none of them terribly controversial, but Cuba is an exception. Only with Cuba do we regulate our own citizens' contact. Only there do we have a trade embargo that limits trade and investment: six decades of embargo, a virtual lifetime of foreign policy failure.

President Trump clearly realized this as a candidate when he supported President Obama's opening to Cuba. It was a good idea to bring Cuba "into the fold," he said. Later, he changed his view.

Now, led by his White House staff, he wants to respond to Cuba's support for the Government of Venezuela by increasing U.S. economic sanctions against Cuba.

This is a mistake. It will do nothing to change Cuba's conduct; it will not improve the situation in Venezuela; and it will harm American interests.

Specifically, he is considering allowing title 3 of the Helms-Burton Act to go into effect. This will allow Americans who lost property in Cuba, including Cubans who later became U.S. citizens, to go to U.S. courts to seek damages—three times the value of their property—by suing Cuba, foreign, and even American companies whose businesses in Cuba today are connected to those properties.

The purpose, as the law's authors made clear in 1996, is to harm Cuba's economy by making it completely inhospitable for foreign investment.

Now, it is no mystery why Presidents Clinton, Bush, Obama, and Trump blocked title 3 from going into effect every 6 months for the past 23 years. It is hypocritical. It penalizes companies for doing what American companies do all over the world. It is contrary to international law, which recognizes the right of expropriation and requires compensation.

It is an extraterritorial sanction that guarantees a response from our trading partners, like Canada, Spain, and the EU, including complaints at the World Trade Organization.

And if you care about agriculture, be warned:

It will open a new front in the trade war, with all the repercussions that can bring;

It will allow Cuba to claim victim status and rally international support;

It will clog our courts with lawsuits;

It will make it impossible to negotiate compensation for U.S. claims in Cuba and, in the end, hurt the very Americans who seek compensation for property they lost;

It will divide us from friends and allies who are now working for a peaceful solution in Venezuela; and

It will guarantee that new investment in Cuba will come from the Russians, Chinese, and others who are hostile to the United States and whose Stated-owned companies can't be sued in U.S. courts.

Once again, the U.S. will be pursuing a strategy that has failed over and over and over again for absolutely no good result.

Madam Speaker, there is a better way that deserves vocal, bipartisan support.

We should continue to press Cuba on human rights. With our Latin American and European allies, we should challenge Cuba to play a constructive role in resolving the crisis in Venezuela, as it did in the Colombian peace process.

There are positive changes in Cuba to support: There is growing Internet access, and there is more political space for Cuban citizens, a growing private sector that now accounts for a third of Cuba's labor force. And despite policies that limit contact, there are rich cultural, educational, and intellectual exchanges between Americans and Cuba.

Madam Speaker, we should follow President Trump's original instinct and allow Americans to do business with Cuba.

We should pass Congressman CRAWFORD's bill to increase the competitiveness of our agricultural exports to Cuba. There is no reason for us to have only a one-eighth market share of Cuba's \$2 billion in annual food imports.

We should finally end U.S. travel restrictions and allow all Americans to travel freely, as they choose, to Cuba. That would serve our values and our national interests, and it is a worthy cause in which Democrats and Republicans can join.

FOR THE PEOPLE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Ohio (Mrs. BEATTY) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BEATTY. Madam Speaker, I am here today for the people. We want an agreement to continue to keep the government open and working for the people.

We are just 8 days from once again having the possibility of having 800,000 workers, Federal employees—air traffic controllers, Border Patrol agents, Secret Service personnel, and many, many more—being furloughed or forced to work without pay. That is not for the people.

We saw how the 35-day-long government shutdown affected our constituents, our communities. We heard all the stories about the shutdown. We heard stories of cancer patients being forced to choose between treatment or paying their rent. We heard the stories of families, for the first time ever, being forced to turn to food banks and soup kitchens to eat. And the list goes on and on.

Madam Speaker, what we did here was, during the State of the Union Address, President Trump spoke about how we must "reject the politics of revenge, resistance, and retaliation." He needs to heed those words and live up to his promise: ". . . bridge old divisions, heal old wounds, build new coalitions, forge new solutions, and unlock the extraordinary promise of America's future."

He can take an important step in that direction by letting the conference continue working to keep the government open for the people.

Democrats and Republican leaderships indicate a long-term funding agreement is just within reach. It is so imperative that the conferees be allowed to put pen to paper before rushing to judgment or to fire off another tweet labeling their efforts as a waste of time, as the President has done time and time again. That is why the President would be well served to put down his phone, to stop tweeting, and to leave the negotiations to Congress.

Members on both sides of the aisle agree that another government shutdown would be disastrous for the economy, for the people, and unnecessarily harm tens of millions of Americans in the process.

The President, on Tuesday, said he was ready and willing to turn a new leaf. Madam Speaker, let's turn that new leaf. Let's keep the government open.

Madam Speaker, House Democrats are committed more than ever to keeping the government open and funding and finding commonsense solutions to the issues affecting my constituents and all Americans.

Madam Speaker, it is simple: Democrats are for the people.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 15 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.