

McGovern to serve on Cuba Working Group

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A year after President Barack Obama announced to normalize relations with Cuba, U.S. Rep. James McGovern is joining a 10-member team of House Democrats and Republicans seeking to advance normalization with the island nation.

"With our two nations working together, we can create new opportunities for American businesses, increase travel and exchange, and support efforts in Cuba to advance political and economic reforms and promote human rights," McGovern said. "Working with Democrats and Republicans in this bipartisan group, I look forward to addressing these and many other issues as we seize this moment and continue to advance U.S.-Cuba relations."

The Cuba Working Group plans to convene meetings with leading experts on Cuba and foreign affairs, host policy roundtables and discussions and will seek to draw attention to how reforms in the U.S. and Cuba are opening new opportunities for commercial, diplomatic and individual relationships.

The goal of the group is to raise the level of understanding within Congress for the need to build strong U.S.-Cuban relations.

Members of the group sent a letter Wednesday to House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., and Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi of California, informing them that they plan to launch the group on Thursday.

McGovern, D-Worcester, has long supported normalizing U.S.-Cuba relations. In August, he joined Secretary of State John Kerry at the opening of the U.S. embassy in Havana.

The Cuba Working Group includes five Democrats: Reps. McGovern, Rosa DeLauro of Connecticut, and Californians Kathy Castor, Sam Farr and Barbara Lee. And, five Republicans: Reps. Rick Crawford of

Arkansas, Ted Poe of Texas, Kevin Cramer of North Dakota, Tom Emmer of Minnesota and Reid Ribble of Wisconsin.

Members of the Cuba Working Group are supporters of one or more Cuba-related bills now before Congress.

The [Cuba Trade Act of 2015](#) would allow U.S. businesses in the private sector to trade with Cuba without restrictions. It was introduced by Emmer in July and is cosponsored by Ribble, Castor, Cramer and Crawford.

The [Cuba Digital and Telecommunications Advancement Act](#) (Cuba DATA Act) would allow U.S. telecommunications and internet companies to provide services to the island. It was introduced by Cramer in July and is cosponsored by Crawford and Emmer.

The [Cuba Agriculture Exports Act](#) would allow for U.S. investment in privately owned Cuban agriculture businesses. It was introduced by Crawford in October and is cosponsored by Poe, Cramer and Emmer.

The [Freedom to Travel to Cuba Act of 2015](#) would allow all U.S. citizens to travel to Cuba. It was introduced by Rep. Mark Sanford, R-S.C., in February and is cosponsored by McGovern, Cramer, Castor, DeLauro, Lee, Farr, Crawford, Emmer and Ribble.

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