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**Manufacturers to Congress: End Cuba Trade Restrictions**

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Developing ties with Cuba will mean more shipments of export cargo and import cargo in international trade, says the National Association of Manufacturers.

On the heels of President Obama's visit to Havana, the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) is calling on congressional leaders to pass legislation to end the trade embargo on Cuba.

A letter authored by NAM Vice President of International Economic Affairs Linda Dempsey commends U.S. Reps. Tom Emmer (R-Minnesota) and Kathy Castor (D-Florida) for introducing the Cuba Trade Act of 2015.

"Eliminating the trade embargo on Cuba will allow for increased economic activity between the two nations and provide manufacturers with new access to a market less than 100 miles from our shores," Dempsey wrote. "The NAM supports the ongoing efforts to achieve normal trade relations with Cuba, and we strongly encourage Congress to advance legislation that will open trade and investment."

The NAM recently formed the Cuba Policy Working Group to look into legislative solutions, including lifting current trade and travel bans between the two countries, making it simpler for Americans to engage with Cuban citizens and allowing companies and individuals in the United States to support the growth of private enterprise in Cuba.

The National Association of Manufacturers commended the efforts of the two members of Congress to repeal the trade embargo on Cuba with the Cuba Trade Act of 2015 (H.R. 3238).

"The NAM is a strong advocate for a robust trade agenda to open markets and level the playing field for domestic manufacturers in the global economy," Dempsey wrote. "Eliminating the trade embargo on Cuba will allow for increased economic activity between the two nations and provide manufacturers with new access to a market less than 100 miles from our shores. As the largest island in the Caribbean, Cuba is well positioned to become a market

for U.S. goods and services.”

Over a year ago, President Barack Obama took the first step toward normalizing relations with Cuba after decades of isolation. Since that announcement, the U.S. government has eased restrictions on exports to the Cuban private sector, allowed trade in the telecommunication and agriculture sectors and issued changes to facilitate authorized travel to the island.

“These policy changes will make it simpler for Americans to engage with Cuban citizens, and they will allow companies and individuals in the United States to support the growth of private enterprise in Cuba,” Dempsey wrote. “Significant hurdles to expanded trade and investment opportunities remain, however, and manufacturers will continue to urge Congress to take actions that will open opportunities for exporters and travelers.”

The NAM supports ongoing efforts to normalize trade relations with Cuba, Dempsey added, and strongly encourages Congress to advance legislation that will open trade and investment.

“The Cuban government should respond to these changes by allowing U.S. companies to trade directly with the emerging Cuban private sector and by continuing market-oriented reforms that facilitate foreign investment,” Dempsey wrote. “Manufacturers know that commercial exchange between the U.S. and Cuban private sectors will bring shared benefits.”

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