

**U.S. Religious Leaders Support Normalization with Cuba:  
Urge Congress to End Embargo**

April 27, 2015

Dear Member of Congress:

As leaders of U.S.-based religious bodies and faith-based organizations, we write in support of normalization of the relationship between the United States and Cuba. Many of our faith communities have long-standing ties to religious bodies in Cuba. These Cuban partners have urged us to call on our own government in support of normalization and an end to the embargo. A relationship of mutual respect and free exchange between our nations will benefit both our peoples.

For many decades, U.S. and Cuban churches have worked with one another toward common goals. Our relationships have been strengthened as religious freedom in Cuba has improved and church membership has grown.

Accordingly we applaud the recent changes in policy announced by President Obama and oppose any Congressional efforts to undermine them. We support full diplomatic relations, greater opportunities for religious and cultural travel, loosened restrictions on remittances and commodities, Cuba's removal from the list of state sponsors of terrorism, more trade and new opportunities to support Cuba's private sector.

We also ask Congress to enact legislation to bring an end to the trade embargo and remove all remaining restrictions on travel to Cuba. These steps require Congressional action. After more than one-half century of ineffective U.S. policy toward Cuba, full engagement is the best way our country can support the aspirations of the Cuban people.

We pray for full normalization, which promises to benefit U.S. citizens and our Cuban brothers and sisters. We urge Congress to seize this moment and remove all obstacles to normalization within its power, helping create a better future for Cuba and a wiser course for the United States.

With blessings and peace,

Very Rev. William Antone  
U.S. Provincial  
Missionary Oblates USP

Bishop Warner H. Brown, Jr.  
President, Council of Bishops  
The United Methodist Church

Archbishop Vicken Aykazian  
Legate  
Armenian Orthodox Church

Sr. Simone Campbell, SSS  
Executive Director  
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social  
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Rev. Geoffrey A. Black  
General Minister and President  
United Church of Christ

Sr. Patricia Chappell  
Executive Director  
Pax Christi USA

Shan Cretin  
General Secretary  
American Friends Service Committee

Rev. Paula Clayton Dempsey  
Director of Partnership Relations  
Alliance of Baptists

Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton  
Presiding Bishop  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Rev. Raymond Finch, MM  
Superior General  
Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers

Sr. Antoinette Gutzler, MM  
President  
Maryknoll Sisters

Rev. Julia Brown Karimu  
Rev. Dr. James Moos  
Co-Executives  
Global Ministries of the Christian Church  
(Disciples of Christ) and United Church of  
Christ

Very Reverend Timothy P. Kesicki  
President  
Jesuit Conference of Canada and the  
United States

Rev. John L. McCullough  
President and CEO  
Church World Service

Rev. Dr. A. Roy Medley  
General Secretary  
American Baptist Churches USA

The Rev. Peter Morales  
President  
Unitarian Universalist Association

Sr. Madeleine Munday,  
Province Leader of Mid-North America  
Sisters of the Good Shepherd

Dr. Lester A. Myers  
President  
Center of Concern

Stanley J. Noffsinger  
General Secretary  
Church of the Brethren

Rev. Gradye Parsons  
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly  
Presbyterian Church (USA)

Dr. James C. Perkins, President  
Dr. Tyrone Pitts, Ecumenical Officer  
Progressive National Baptist Convention

Diane Randall  
Executive Secretary  
Friends Committee on National Legislation

Rabbi Elhanan 'Sunny' Schnitzer  
President  
The Cuba America Jewish Mission

The Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori  
Presiding Bishop and Primate  
The Episcopal Church

Sam Stanton  
Executive Director  
Maryknoll Lay Missioners

Dr. Sayyid M. Syeed  
National Director  
Islamic Society of North America

Dr. Steven Timmermans  
Executive Director  
Christian Reformed Church

Dr. Sharon E. Watkins  
General Minister and President  
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the  
United States and Canada

James Winkler  
General Secretary and President  
National Council of Churches, USA