

A RESOLUTION

25-144

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

May 16, 2023

To declare the sense of the Council that the United States should end the economic blockade of Cuba and remove Cuba from the State Sponsors of Terrorism list due to the unjust harm it causes the Cuban people.

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this resolution may be cited as the “Sense of the Council on the Restoration of Cuban American Relations Resolution of 2023”.

Sec. 2. The Council finds that:

(1) In 1962, the United States began imposing an economic, commercial, and financial embargo on Cuba.

(2) In 2014, President Barack Obama and Cuban President Raul Castro began work to re-establish diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba as well as to remove Cuba from the designated State Sponsors of Terrorism list. The goal was to normalize relations to support Cuban residents and Cuban Americans and advance mutual interests.

(3) President Donald J. Trump’s administration later imposed 243 new sanctions on Cuba, including restrictions on Cuban Americans who send remittances to families and businesses in Cuba. Additionally, the Trump administration added Cuba back to the State Sponsors of Terrorism list. Former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo accused Cuba of “repeatedly providing support for acts of international terrorism” without providing evidence to support these claims.

(4) Under President Joe Biden’s administration, some travel restrictions have been partially lifted but many limitations remain. A complete restoration of travel and trade would greatly benefit both countries. The current sanctions prevent meaningful engagement and trade between the United States and Cuba, a policy that also punishes other countries and entities that engage with Cuba. These sanctions, and the threat of secondary sanctions to other nations, continue to inflict daily hardships on the people of Cuba making it difficult for them to grow their economy, maintain high quality healthcare, and improve their education systems.

(5) One example of the harm the embargo has had on Cuba is that vital medical equipment is in short supply and humanitarian assistance following catastrophic events, such as hurricanes, is often impeded due to these harmful policies. Calixto Garcia Hospital in Havana is Cuba’s main trauma hospital. It only had 2 anesthesia machines as of 2020 as other countries had

refused to provide additional equipment due to fear of being sanctioned. The United States has the power to improve challenges like these by lifting the threat of sanctions from partner countries.

(6) The economic impacts of the restrictions affect both countries. In 2017, the United Nations estimated that the blockade had cost the Cuban economy \$130 billion USD since it was instated, or more than \$2 billion each year. Although food exports are technically allowed under the embargo, those in the United States who wish to export to Cuba must first obtain licenses or authorizations from the Departments of Commerce and Treasury. This hurts United States commercial interests by reducing trade with, or in some cases completely eliminating, a potential nearby trading partner. Although the sanctions do not completely bar other countries from trading with Cuba, they require that any export containing more than 10% of American goods must first obtain a license from the United States. This strained access to goods has a negative impact on Cuban schools, universities, and research institutions as they often lack modern equipment.

(7) Cuba also lacks access to many technology services. Certain smartphone applications, networks, and online services are inaccessible from Cuba. Amazon, PayPal, and the Apple Store are just a few examples of otherwise semi-global services unavailable to Cuban citizens. Without a full and complete reversal of these restrictions, it will be the Cuban people, lacking full access to common modern technology, who will continue to feel the effects of these sanctions most acutely.

(8) Thus far, the United Nations has voted 30 times to condemn the United States' embargo on Cuba. In the most recent vote, only the United States and Israel voted against the resolution. This stands in stark contrast to the 185 countries who voted in favor of the resolution. Here in the United States, city councils, state legislatures, school boards, labor councils, unions, and other organizations have passed approximately 67 resolutions urging the end of the embargos, encouraging scientific cooperation, and pushing the federal government to remove Cuba from the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism. The power lies with President Biden to remove Cuba from the list and to begin to normalize relations between our countries.

Sec. 3. It is the sense of the Council that President Biden and Congress should take all necessary steps to end all aspects of the economic blockade imposed against Cuba by the United States and remove Cuba from the State Sponsors of Terrorism list due to the unjust harm it causes to the Cuban people.

Sec. 4. Transmittal.

The Secretary to the Council shall transmit a copy of this resolution to the Executive Office of the President, officers of both houses of Congress, to the committee chairs that have jurisdiction over District of Columbia affairs, and to the Delegate to the House of Representatives from the District of Columbia.

Sec. 5. This resolution shall take effect immediately.