



The United States Conference of Mayors

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THE U.S. CONFERENCE OF MAYORS BEGINS NEW CHAPTER IN RELATIONSHIP WITH CUBA

Mayors Look to Remove Obstacles Between U.S. and Cuban Cities

Washington, D.C. – Under the leadership of the U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM) President Baltimore (MD) Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, a delegation from USCM traveled to Cuba last week and met with Cuban government officials and community leaders in an effort to forge a new bond between U.S. cities and the island nation. Over the course of four days, Rawlings-Blake, USCM Vice President Oklahoma City (OK) Mayor Mick Cornett, USCM Second Vice President New Orleans (LA) Mayor Mitch Landrieu, and USCM CEO & Executive Director Tom Cochran worked to learn about the changes that have occurred in Cuba since USCM last visited in 1978. While the mayors were in Cuba, their Cuban counterparts at the municipal and provincial levels urged them to call on Congress to remove the obstacles of the U.S. trade embargo against Cuba.

"We are greatly encouraged by our visit and thank the Cuban government for inviting us," said Mayor Rawlings-Blake. "This mission marks the first step towards determining how we can collaborate with our counterparts in Cuba to strengthen the economic vitality of both of our nations. We look forward to sharing what we have learned with our fellow mayors and brainstorming with them on how we can continue to support the evolution of our relationship with the Cuban people and government."

While in Cuba, the delegation met with the Honorable Gustavo Machin, the Deputy Director of the North American Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Dr. Gustavo Cobreiro Suárez, rector of the University of Havana; and provincial and municipal leaders in the Cuban National Assembly.

The mayors also visited some of Cuba's most important political, technological, and cultural sites, including the National Arts School, the Center of Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology, the Latin American School of Medicine, and Mariel Port. The agenda featured cultural exchanges with a diverse group of local experts and academics, who provided the delegation with details about the history of Cuba and the changes currently underway on the island.

"We were honored to be invited by the Cuban government and appreciate the warm hospitality that they showed us throughout our visit," said Mayor Cornett. "It is our sincere hope that the dialogue that began this week will continue and we can move ahead in new and productive ways that allow us to enhance business opportunities benefiting the people of both countries."

"The City of New Orleans and Cuba share cultural and commercial connections that date back to our City's founding in 1718," said Mayor Landrieu. "And as the United States continues to increase diplomatic relations with Cuba, this mission was highly instructive as we gained a better understanding of what opportunities exist in Cuba today. There's no doubt that there is great promise for both countries, and for New Orleans in particular, through potential trade relations and cultural exchanges. We are committed to finding common ground that will help open a new path forward that brings our two nations together. We are duly optimistic for what the future holds."

"This trip marked the first official mission of the U.S. Conference of Mayors since 1978," said Tom Cochran. "The Conference has long been committed to creating and sustaining relationships with our international colleagues and Cuba is no exception to that rule. We look forward to removing the obstacles of the embargo as President Obama articulated during his visit to Cuba earlier this year."

About The United States Conference of Mayors -- The U.S. Conference of Mayors is the official nonpartisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more. There are nearly 1,400 such cities in the country today, and each city is represented in the Conference by its chief elected official, the mayor. Like us on Facebook at [facebook.com/usmayors](https://www.facebook.com/usmayors), or follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/usmayors.

