Why Congress Must Pass the Freedom to Travel to Cuba Bill

Cuba is the only country in the world Americans aren’t allowed to travel to and within freely. The bipartisan Freedom to Travel to Cuba Act makes it legal for U.S. citizens to travel as freely to Cuba as any other country.

In less than two years, the Obama Administration has issued five rounds of regulatory changes to ease restrictions on travel to Cuba, but the travel ban still exists. Until Congress passes legislation to end restrictions on travel and related transactions, both countries will continue to lose out on the economic benefits of increased engagement.

- Restricting the rights of Americans to travel to Cuba is inconsistent with our values as a free society. Americans are only allowed to visit Cuba if it falls under a specific category of permissible travel. Even eligible Americans must comply with unnecessary burdens while in Cuba, such as traveling with licensed tour operators, adhering to a full-time travel schedule while in Cuba, and maintaining travel records for 5 years.

- The travel ban has failed to liberate the Cuban people and improve human rights. Over the past 50 years, it has stifled Cuba’s economic growth and the freedom of information, preventing opportunities to promote change and democracy within Cuba.

- Lifting the travel ban provides tremendous opportunities for U.S. agribusiness. Cuba imports between 60-70% of its food, or around $2 billion annually. But as Cuba is quickly becoming one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world, they must increase the number of food imports in order to keep up with the rising number of island travelers. Lifting the travel ban will strengthen Cuba’s economy and create a massive new market for U.S. agriculture and food producers.

- Given high demand, the U.S. manufacturing industry will see a boom in production in order to maintain the necessary infrastructure upgrades to keep up with the increased flow of travel. U.S. manufacturers produce necessary components to facilitate every part of travel, including producing and fortifying cars, planes, and ferries.