

June 2, 2021

Emily Belson
Office of Economic Sanctions Policy & Implementation
Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Ms. Belson:

My great-grandfather founded J.C. Newman Cigar Company in 1895. Four generations and 126 years later, we are proud to be the oldest family-owned premium cigar maker in the United States. Today, we continue our family tradition of handcrafting premium cigars in our historic El Reloj cigar factory in the "Cigar City" of Tampa, Florida.

I am writing to ask that the U.S. Department of State please revise the Sec. 515.582 list to allow us to import raw Cuban tobacco to the United States grown by "independent Cuban entrepreneurs." Specifically, please include section IV, chapter 24, heading 2401 (unmanufactured tobacco) in the list of Cuban goods that may be legally imported under 31 C.F.R. § 515.582, just as the Department of State has already done for coffee.

Sec. 515.582 allows "commercial imports of certain specified goods and services produced by independent Cuban entrepreneurs" in order to "help promote [the Cuban people's] independence from Cuban authorities." 80 Fed. Reg. 2291-92 (Jan. 16, 2015). Including raw tobacco in the Sec. 515.582 list would serve this purpose because it would allow American cigar factories to compete directly with the Cuban government and their prized export, Cuban cigars.

My family has a long history with Cuban tobacco. From 1895 until President Kennedy imposed the Cuban Embargo in 1962, my grandfather and great-grandfather imported millions of pounds of tobacco from Cuba. Our last shipment of Cuban tobacco was the subject of a case decided by the Supreme Court of the United States. *Standard Cigar Co. v. Tabacalera Severiano Jorge, S.A.*, 376 U.S. 780 (1964), *rev'g* 311 F.2d 438 (5th Cir. 1962); 392 F.2d 706 (5th Cir. 1968). We also own the last bale of pre-Embargo Cuban tobacco in the United States, which we continue to age in our El Reloj cigar factory in Tampa.



















As you may know, cigars are Cuba's top export. Because the Cuban government owns and controls the island's cigar industry, cigars are a primary source of foreign capital that finances the Cuban government. Part of the mystique of Cuban cigars is that cigars with Cuban tobacco are only made in Cuba, but that has not always been the case. Prior to the Embargo, far more cigars were rolled with Cuban tobacco in Tampa than in Cuba because Tampa was home to the world's best cigar factories; Tampa was internationally known as the "Fine Cigar Capital of the World." Authorizing the importation of raw tobacco grown in Cuba would allow us and other American cigar makers to support independent Cuban entrepreneurs and to prove, once again, that we can roll better cigars with Cuban tobacco than Cuba can.

My family and I cordially invite you and your colleagues to visit our historic El Reloj cigar factory in Tampa so that we can show you how we roll premium cigars in America and the last bale of pre-Embargo Cuban tobacco in the United States.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Drew Newman

General Counsel and Great-grandson of the Founder