

**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

Archbishop Vicken Aykazian
Legate
Armenian Orthodox Church

Rev. Geoffrey A. Black
General Minister and President
United Church of Christ

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

Sr. Simone Campbell, SSS
Executive Director
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social
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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