

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

TODD STAPLES
COMMISSIONER



April 15, 2009

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama:

On January 29, 2009, I wrote you requesting a review of the United States' trade policies with Cuba. The decision to relax travel and remittance restrictions on Cuban-Americans and to encourage the development of telecommunications infrastructure and availability is a welcomed new era for U.S.-Cuban relationships that has the prospect of leading to significantly enhanced U.S. exports. In light of the recently announced changes, I would ask your implementation of two important policy modifications.

First, authorize a Texas airport, or airports, to offer direct flights between Texas and Cuba. As a transportation hub for much of the southeastern and southwestern United States, Texas has the ability to offer direct flight services for the benefit of Cuban-Americans and the U.S. agriculture industry. In order to maximize the administration's actions for the promotion of the American people and economy, I ask your favorable consideration of Texas-based direct flight services to Cuba.

Secondly, ease Cuban travel to the United States for educational purposes and trade opportunities allowed under the Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act of 2000. After touring Cuba's agricultural facilities last year, I believe allowing more freedom of travel to Cubans participating in educational programs, as well as agribusiness and medical trade, would advance the goal of promoting human rights in Cuba by increasing participants' awareness of the lifestyles Americans enjoy because of our political freedom and market economy.



The Honorable Barack Obama
April 15, 2009
Page 2

Thank you in advance for your leadership on this issue. Please feel free to contact me if I may provide additional information.

Sincerely yours,



Todd Staples

TS/KS/ks

cc: Mr. Timothy Geithner
Mr. Eric H. Holder, Jr.
The Honorable Ron Kirk
The Honorable Gary Locke
The Honorable Janet Napolitano
The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
Texas Congressional Delegation