

In the U.S., Opposition to Changes to Cuba Policy Continues to Emerge



Washington, June 14 (RHC)-- In the U.S., numerous voices continue to rise in opposition of possible changes by the Donald Trump administration to the policy of relaxation with Cuba.

The respected New York magazine *The Nation* launched a drive urging people to contact their senators and demand that the US policy of better relations with Cuba not be reversed. Press reports in the US have been pointing to a reversal in the Cuba policy coming on Friday in Miami, during a visit there by Trump.

The Nation says there is a need to expand, not contract, the engagement with Cuba, which the magazine says could have a negative economic impact. Increased restrictions on travel alone would be dramatic, says the *Nation*, with losses for the US travel industry at \$3.5 billion and over 10,000 jobs.

In the US also, a coalition of high-tech firms, farming interests, travel companies and young Cuban-Americans has been thrown into action by the looming announcement of a new policy towards Cuba.

"If this were a traditional policy environment, we'd be having great success," said Collin Lavery, head of one of the biggest Cuba travel companies and a consultant for U.S. corporations seeking business in Cuba. "We're certainly winning the debate for public opinion and in foreign policy circles," said Lavery, but he noted that unfortunately it appears that it will come down to a back-room political deal between the president and Cuban-American members of Congress.

"Thousands of Americans are visiting Cuba and fueling the fastest growth in its private sector since 1959," CubaOne, a group of young pro-engagement Cuban-Americans, wrote in an open letter to Trump Monday.

After months of public silence, Airbnb last week released a report on its activities in Cuba, which have put \$40 million into the hands of private bed-and-breakfast owners since the online lodging giant became the first major U.S. company into Cuba in the wake of Obama's declaration of detente.

Google, which installed servers on the island to speed Cuban internet service last year, spoke out for the first time Monday in favor of maintaining relations.

"Google has played a formative role in the first chapter of Cuba's connectivity story, but this is just the beginning," Brett Perlmutter, head of strategy and operations for Google Cuba, said at a conference in Miami on Monday.

An article Monday in the Miami Herald wondered whether Florida Senator Rubio, the man considered to be behind the machinations to have the Cuba policy changed, was trading the integrity of U.S. for a Cuba-policy shift from Trump.

The optics and the timing of a visit by Trump to Miami to announce a rollback advocated by Rubio of President Barack Obama's engagement policy certainly make it seem that way, charged the article, which notes that the ultra conservative senator up-ending one of President Obama's most significant legacy achievements in foreign affairs is a top priority and is personal.

The article concludes: "Trading the integrity of the U.S. for a political shift on Cuba policy is disgraceful."

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