

Political Stumbling Blocks Preventing Interaction With Cuba

There Are Groups In The U.S. That Are Focused On Maintaining The Cuban Embargo

Part 9 of a 10 Part Series

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Anti-Castro, pro-embargo interests in the U.S. is defended by political representation in the U.S Senate and House, the Cuban-American lobby and the 27 electoral votes held by the state of Florida. Although most Cuban-Americans live in Florida, New Jersey, New York, California and Texas efforts are underway to pick up U.S. Congress members in agriculture states as allies during the November election.

Cuban-Americans represent a small portion of the total population in the U.S., less than one percent. The U.S. Census bureau reports the U.S. census at 300 million. A 2004 Pew report estimates the number of Cuban-Americans living in the U. S. at about 1.5 million, of which 912,686 immigrated to the United States from Cuba.

In 2004 an estimated 990,000 Cubans lived in Florida, 81,000 lived in New Jersey, 78,000 in New York, 74,000 in California and 34,000 resided in Texas.

The Pew Hispanic Center in its report, "Cubans in the United States," said, the first phase of Cuban migration took place in 1959-62. This first phase of Cuban migration, "primarily consisted of upper and upper-middle class families in professional and managerial occupations." This group of exiles is sometimes referred to as hardliners.

Included in the report were results of surveys conducted by the Institute for Public Opinion Research and the Cuban Research Institute of Florida International University. They examined the attitudes of Cuban-Americans of South Florida in 2004. The survey found a majority of U.S. Cubans (56%) supported dialogue with the Cuban government. The United Nations General Assembly believes the embargo should be ended, it has voted to end the embargo every year since 1992.

With the majority of Cuban-Americans supporting dialogue with the Cuban government, and the United Nations vote of 183 in favor and only four countries against ending the embargo, it is only reasonable to wonder who the Cuban American representatives in Congress and lobbyists really represent.

Money may have something to do with it. According to opensecrets.org, "a total of 14 Cuban-American donors, and their families, gave at least \$100,000 over the period of this study to federal candidates, political parties, and anti-Castro PACs. Together, they accounted for more than \$3.4 million in contribution; about 39 percent of the total given by the entire Cuban-American community." The period studied was 1979-2000.

The 14 top donors during this period were:

- Alfred and Teresa Estrada, head of Pan American Enterprises and Vista Magazine, donated \$725,000. 96 percent of their contributions went to Democratic candidates and party committees.
- Paul and Gertrude Cejas, U.S. Ambassador to Belgium, former chair and CEO of Care-Florida Health Systems, donated \$411,000. 98 percent Democrats.
- Domingo R. Moreira and family, President of LADEX, donated \$370,000. 42 percent Republicans, 32 percent to Free Cuba PAC, and 26 percent to Democrats.
- Jorge Mas Canosa and family, founder of MasTec, largest Hispanic-owned company in the U.S. donated \$364,000. 49 percent Republicans, 32 percent Democrats and 18 percent to Free Cuba PAC.
- Salvador and Patricia Diaz-Verson, chair and president of Diaz-Verson Capital Investment, and his half-sister Elena Diaz-Verson Amos, founder of AFLAC; Verson donated \$260,000. 77 percent Democrats and 23 percent Republicans.
- Amos donated \$240,000. 60 percent to Republicans and 27 percent to Democrats.
- Carlos Portes and family, Portes Group, donated \$180,000 all to Democrats.
- Vivan Mannerud Verble and husband Marvin Verble, owner of Miami's Airline Brokers Co. donated \$173,000 all to Democrats.
- Carlos and Rosa De La Cruz and family, chairman of Eagle Brands and exclusive Anheuser-Busch wholesaler in Miami-Dade County, donated \$136,000. 55 percent to Democrats and 44 percent to Republicans.
- Maria Elena Torano and son Leslie Pantin Jr., runs META Inc., donated \$112,000. 98 percent Democrats.
- Jose Costa and family, head of Costa Nursery Farms, donated \$116,000. 34 percent Republicans, 34 percent to Democrats and 30 percent to Free Cuba PAC.
- Manuel D. and Lisette Medina, chair and CEO of Terremark Group, donated \$115,000. 94 percent to Democrats.
- Sergio Pino and family, founder, director, president and CEO of Century Partners Group, donated \$112,000. 67 percent Republicans and 21 percent to Democrats with the balance to independent U.S. Senate candidate Willie Logan of Florida.

The Fanjul family donations include almost \$900,000 in political contributions serving their sugar interest. Alfie Fanjul served as co-chairman of Bill Clinton's Florida campaign in 1992. Jose Fanjul was vice chairman of the Bush-Quayle finance committee during the 1988 campaign. Jose also worked on Senator Bob Dole's presidential campaign. www.opensecrets.org/pubs/cubareport/players.asp

Do the wishes of 15 wealthy families with a grudge, supporting an internal opposition movement against the Castro's, outweigh common sense and the wishes of humanitarian, religious, educational, travel, industrial and agriculture groups, not to mention the majority of Cuban-Americans and the U.N.? Do our representatives in elected offices in Washington D.C. work for us or, do they work for wealthy Cuban-American exiles?

Today, Sen. Mel Martinez (R-FL), Sen. Bob Menendez (D-NJ), Rep. Lincoln Diaz-Balart (R-FL), Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL), Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), and Rep. Albio Sires (D-NJ) represent Cuban-Americans hardliners in the U.S. Congress.

Other Cuban-Americans are politically active, and in positions which enable them to support the embargo. Eduardo Aguirre is the U.S. Ambassador to Spain and Andorra.

Emilio Gonzalez is the current director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Carlos Gutierrez is Secretary to the United States Department of Commerce.

Adolfo A. Franco is Assistant Administrator for USAID Latin America and the Caribbean.

Ana Carbonell is Chief of Staff for Rep. Lincoln Diaz-Balart. Nilda Pedrosa is a former State De-

Figure 1. Source: www.opensecrets.org

USCD PAC CONTRIBUTIONS TO UNITED STATES FEDERAL CANDIDATES IN AGRICULTURE STATES AS OF JUNE 2, 2008.	
USCD PAC CONTRIBUTIONS	
<i>Note: List below includes identification. Former donors coverage even only, this is not a complete list of contributions to U.S. federal candidates in the 2008 election.</i>	
Illinois Candidates Received: Melissa Bean (D-IL) \$7,000. Bill Foster (D-IL) \$1,000. Luis V. Chuliver (D-IL) \$1,000. Deborah Halverson (D-IL) \$2,000. Philip G. Hare (D-IL) \$9,000. Mark Kirk (R-IL) \$3,000. Don Mansullo (R-IL) \$1,000. Peter Roskam (R-IL) \$1,000. Aaron Schock (R-IL) \$2,000. John M. Shimkus (R-IL) \$1,000. Total for Illinois \$29,000.	Missouri Candidates Received: Randy Carnahan (D-MO) \$2,000. Frank Cleeve (D-MO) \$1,000. Sam Graves (R-MO) \$5,000. Ike Skelton (D-MO) \$2,000. Total for Missouri \$10,000.
Indiana Candidates Received: Dan Burton (R-IN) \$5,000. Andre Carson (D-IN) \$5,000. Joe Donnelly (D-IN) \$3,000. Eliot Linder (D-IN) \$3,000. Baron Hill (D-IN) \$2,000. Mike Pence (R-IN) \$7,000. Total for Indiana \$25,000.	Ohio Candidates Received: John Boehner (R-OH) \$10,000. Steve Chabot (R-OH) \$2,000. Stephanie Tubew Jones (D-OH) \$3,500. James D. Jordan (R-OH) \$1,000. Steven C. LaTourette (R-OH) \$1,000. Robert E. Latta (R-OH) \$1,000. Deborah Pryce (R-OH) \$1,000. Tina Ryan (D-OH) \$2,000. Jean Schmidt (R-OH) \$2,000. Zachary T. Space (D-OH) \$7,000. Betty Sue Sutton (D-OH) \$1,000. Patrick J. Tiberi (R-OH) \$1,000. Charlie Wilson (D-OH) \$3,000. Total for Ohio \$35,000.
Iowa Candidates Received: Bruce Braley (D-IA) \$5,000. Steven A. King (R-IA) \$2,000. Tom Latham (R-IA) \$4,000. Total for Iowa \$11,000.	Tennessee Candidates Received: David Davis (R-TN) \$1,000. John J. Duncan Jr. (R-TN) \$1,000. Total for Tennessee \$2,000.
Kentucky Candidates Received: Ben Chandler (D-KY) \$4,000. Hal Rogers (R-KY) \$1,000. Ed Whitfield (R-KY) \$1,000. Total for Kentucky \$6,000.	Contributions of \$10,000 each went to: John Boehner (R-OH) James Clyburn (D-SC) Ron Klein (D-FL) Tim Mahoney (D-FL) Delade Wasserman Schultz (D-FL) Alfred Stree (D-ND) John Cornyn (R-TX) Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) Mitch McConnell (R-KY).
Louisiana Candidates Received: Rodney Alexander (R-LA) \$3,000. Charles Boustany Jr. (R-LA) \$1,000. Charles J. McElroy (D-LA) \$2,000. David Vitter (R-LA) \$5,000. Total for Louisiana \$11,000.	
For a complete listing and most current report check our open secrets website.	

Figure 2. Source: www.opensecrets.org

SENATOR MEL MARTINEZ'S PAC. Sen. Mel Martinez's PAC, Freedom & Democracy Fund	
FREEDOM & DEMOCRACY FUND CONTRIBUTIONS TO FEDERAL CANDIDATES	
House Recipient Totals Buchanan, Vernon (R-FL) \$10,000. Mack, Conde (R-FL) \$2,000.	Collins, Susan M (R-ME) \$10,000. Cornyn, John (R-TX) \$5,000. Grassano, Lindsey (R-SC) \$10,000. Inhofe, James M (R-OK) \$5,000.
Presidential Recipient Total McCain, John (R) \$10,000.	Kennedy, John Neely (R-LA) \$5,000. McConnell, Mitch (R-KY) \$10,000.
Senate Recipient Totals Alexander, Lamar (R-TX) \$5,000. Hawayo, John A (R-NY) \$5,000. Chambliss, Saxby (R-GA) \$10,000. Coleman, Kevin (R-MD) \$10,000.	Roberts, Pat (R-NE) \$5,000. Schaffer, Bob (R-CO) \$5,000. Smith, Gordon H (R-OR) \$10,000. Stevens, Ted (R-AR) \$5,000. Sullivan, John E (R-NH) \$5,000.
The Freedom & Democracy Fund contributions to federal candidates totaled \$125,000, 100 percent to Republican candidates.	
Revised list of donors by the FEC released 10/1/08.	

partment Official and Senior Policy Director for Sen. Mel Martinez.

Nancy Montanez Johner is the USDA Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services.

The Cuban-American lobbyist, are anti-Castro, pro-embargo and pro-democracy groups whose goal is to influence the U.S. government in its policy towards Cuba.

The Cuban-American lobby includes, but is not limited to the following four organizations: The Cuba Democracy Caucus, The US-Cuba Democracy (USCD) PAC, The Cuban American National Foundation and The Cuban Liberty Council.

PAC's use campaign contributions in order to influence elections in their home state and across the United States.

One such group USCD PAC notes on their web site, the following agenda, "USCD PAC will raise funds from individuals to contribute to candidates running for the United States Congress, who oppose any economic measures that directly or indirectly finance and prolong the repressive machinery of the Castro regime and, who are committed to supporting legislation seeking to strengthen support for Cuba's internal opposition movement."

The Federal Election Commission released information regarding the USCD PAC on June 2, 2008.

According to Open Secrets web site, contributions to United States federal candidates in both the House and Senate Seats, from only the USCD PAC in the 2008 election cycle are, \$359,500 for Democrats and \$236,500 for Republicans. This particular PAC makes contributions to candidates in states they wish to gain influence. See figure 1. Also see figure 2, which lists the "Senator Mel Martinez PAC" contributions.

There are 150 candidates running for the U.S. House in 2008 to which the USCD PAC donated money. These candidates represent 79 Democrats and 71 Republicans from 38 states. One thing these House candidates have in common is they represent agriculture producing states. The largest number of candidates who accepted USCD PAC money represents California, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, Ohio, Missouri, Kentucky, Louisiana, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, Texas, New York and North Carolina. Arkansas, Mississippi and Kansas are the only major agriculture states where candidates have not received/accepted funds from this PAC as June 2, 2008.

As of this writing no record of political contributions could be found for The Cuban Democracy Caucus or The Cuban Liberty Council at Open Secrets.

The Cuban-American hardliners have spent millions to gain allies in the U.S. Congress at the expense of the majority of Cuban-American wishes and the United Nations General Assembly voting since 1992. They are well represented in the U.S. Congress, hold powerful positions in the public service sector and are working hard to add allies with PAC contributions. Congresswoman Jo Ann Emerson (R-MO) described her experience with opponents of the US-Cuba issue who are, "always in my face, not very nicely in my face and they can be very intimidating."

The hardliners have made efforts to cover all the bases. If all their efforts do not pan out as well as expected they have another option-the Presidential Election.

Florida holds 27 electoral votes and is predicted to be a swing state in the 2008 presidential election. Washington Post, political blogger Chris Cillizza, predicted the potential swing states for the 2008 election. He lists Iowa (7 votes), New Mexico (5 votes), Nevada (5 votes), Colorado (9 votes), Ohio (20 votes), Virginia (13 votes), New Hampshire (4 votes), Florida (27 votes), Minnesota (10 votes), and Missouri (11 votes) as potential swing states for the November election.

Florida has picked the winner in the last nine out of 10 presidential elections. Can Americans and Cubans expect the elimination of the US-Cuban embargo as long as McCain or Obama get the Florida electoral votes and win the presidency?

The pro-embargo machine is well organized, wealthy and powerful. Will their influence continue to grow?

Next week August 1, 2008 the MidAmerica Farmer will publish a commentary which will conclude the series on the US Cuban Embargo Issue.