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Promoting economic development for La., group seeks to end Cuban embargo

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BATON ROUGE - A grassroots effort to lift the trade embargo with Cuba took off in Louisiana Thursday.

Engage Cuba revealed it has established a Louisiana coalition. More than 30 business and government leaders are part of the group, including Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry Commissioner Mike Strain and executives from Louisiana ports.

"Our Louisiana State Council is another example of the momentum in support of lifting the Cuban embargo and opening travel with one of our closest neighbors," said James Williams, President of Engage Cuba. "Louisiana and Cuba have a long history of doing business, and lifting the Cuban embargo would only open up opportunities for Louisiana's economy – from ports to farms – in order to support the Cuban people. It's time to end 50 years of failed, isolationist policies towards Cuba."

"The Ports Association of Louisiana is proud to join Engage Cuba's newly launched Louisiana State Council," says Joe Accardo, Executive Director of Ports Association of Louisiana. "Lifting the embargo and allowing for more trade between our countries would directly benefit Louisiana's ports and our economy, bringing more goods through our ports and supporting Louisiana's jobs."

In 2014, President Obama normalized relations with Cuba but it would take an act of Congress to lift the 1960s-era economic embargo.