

# *Cuba and U.S. State of Louisiana Explore Economic Opportunities*

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Havana, October 5 (RHC)-- The Governor of Louisiana John Bel Edwards is in Cuba, heading up a large delegation to explore business opportunities between the southern U.S. State and the Caribbean nation. The U.S. delegation is composed of 40 business people, representing several sectors, as well as local authorities and academics.

The U.S. visitors participated alongside representatives from Cuban state enterprises and ministries in a business forum here in Havana to identify possible opportunities for trade and investment in a post blockade era.

Forum discussions focused primarily on agriculture and transportation, and concluded with the signing of two memoranda of understanding, the first one between Cuba's Agricultural Enterprise Group and the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, and the other one between authorities at the ports of New Orleans and Lake Charles and Cuba's National Port Administration.

Governor Edwards pointed to new opportunities opened up by the signing of the documents, which will allow for further exploration of trade and business opportunities. He further said that business talks between Cuba and the U.S. State of Louisiana began last July, when an advance team from his office visited Havana.

The governor of the U.S. State of Louisiana described the U.S. blockade on Cuba as an obstacle and recalled that lawmakers from his State passed a resolution, urging the U.S. government to strengthen ties with Cuba so as to take advantage of current and emerging business opportunities.

María de la Luz B'Hamel, Director for North America at the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Trade and Investment, said that Tuesday's forum provided an ideal opportunity to share information with authorities and entrepreneurs from one of the U.S. states closest to Cuban shores. She added that Louisiana has been an important provider of foodstuffs to Cuba despite the restrictions imposed by the U.S. blockade, which she described as 'the main obstacle to bilateral trade expansion.'

The U.S. delegation will stay in Cuba until Friday, October 7th. Their agenda includes a visit to the Mariel Special Development Zone, as well as meetings with Cuban authorities at the ministries of Public Health, Foreign Trade, and Agriculture.

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