

# *Montana State legislator calls for end to blockade of Cuba*

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Washington, May 6 (RHC)-- State lawmaker Jessica Karjala, member of the House of Representatives of the state of Montana, called for an end to the blockade maintained by Washington against Cuba, in the midst of the new coronavirus pandemic.

In an article published Tuesday in the Independent Record newspaper, she said that before the current health crisis, the people of the island were already suffering from shortages of food, medicine and fuel, in large part due to the siege imposed by the United States for almost 60 years.

Karjala said that although there are supposed to be exceptions for humanitarian efforts within Washington's policy against the island, "confusion over sanctions and the threat of crippling fines make the procurement of medical supplies unnecessarily difficult."

In that regard, she mentioned that an American company acquired a business that provided Cuba with necessary artificial respirators, which prevented the sale of those supplies to the Caribbean country.

He warned that, to make things even worse, foreign sales to the neighbouring territory cannot have more than 10 percent of American components.

The U.S. punishments are so widespread that many foreign companies are unwilling to risk such a heavily sanctioned environment for fear of repercussions, the Democratic politician added.

"Given the current crisis, we must suspend U.S. sanctions against Cuba to ensure delivery of urgently needed humanitarian and medical supplies," she said. Karjala recalled that some of the punishments imposed against the island were lifted in 2015 (during the administration of former President Barack Obama), "but unfortunately they were applied again with more severe restrictions in 2017," after Republican Donald Trump arrived at the White House.

All politics and blame aside, there is no legitimate argument for cutting off the supply chain to any country in times of pandemic, especially a country that has done its best in times of crisis, the state legislator said.

She said that before the current emergency, Cuba was able to develop a vaccine against lung cancer, eliminate amputations due to diabetes, and make progress in treating viral infections.

Some of these drugs are playing a role in the fight against COVID-19 around the world, said the legislator, who also noted that Cuba has sent medical personnel to more than 20 countries to help in the response to the current pandemic. Karjala called it cruel to maintain the blockade now that Cubans are also suffering the ravages of the disease caused by the coronavirus. "We cannot allow our own adversity to harden us and make us selfish, especially to a country where we have caused and worsened the difficulties, and which manages to offer help to others."

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