

# *U.S. Chamber of Commerce President Defends Visit to Cuba*

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Havana, May 29 (RHC) – The head of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce defended his visit to Cuba on Wednesday after coming under fire from critics in the U.S. Congress who contend the trip would contribute to presenting Cuba's so-called "communist government" in a good light.

Chamber President Thomas Donohue said his agenda was unhindered by Cuban authorities and he was confident he was getting a "fair look" at Cuba, after which the influential lobbying group would report its findings to the U.S. government and business sector.

According to a report by Reuters, Donohue, a champion of capitalism and free enterprise, has long opposed U.S. economic sanctions against Cuba, seeing them as an impediment to U.S. business interests.

He and a small group of U.S. business leaders are in the middle of a three-day visit, in part to assess the ongoing economic reforms enacted by President Raul Castro, that have opened the doors for a nascent private sector in the Caribbean island.

"I've been free to go where I want. I'm talking to people from the private and the public sector," Donohue told reporters while visiting a private cooperative. "We're going to meet with small businesses. We're meeting with people from other countries that are operating here. I think we'll get a fair look and we're

enjoying ourselves."

Upon the announcement of the trip a week ago, U.S. Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, a renowned anti-Cuban Republican from south Florida, blasted the visit as "just another Potemkin village tour," a stance followed by U.S. Senator Robert Menendez, a New Jersey Democrat.

Donohue countered that many others in Congress and the private sector oppose the economic blockade on Cuba, which has sought to undermine and isolate the island country since its 1959 revolution. "We think this is a very positive opportunity," Donohue said about the visit.

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