

**TESTIMONY OF**  
**CONGRESSWOMAN DONNA F. EDWARDS**  
**MARYLAND'S 4<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT**



**HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON STATE,  
FOREIGN OPERATIONS, AND RELATED PROGRAMS  
REGARDING THE FISCAL YEAR 2012  
APPROPRIATIONS.**

**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13, 2011  
10 A.M.  
2362-A RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING.**

I would like to thank Chairwoman Granger and Ranking Member Lowey and the rest of the Committee for giving me this opportunity to testify before the State, Foreign Operations, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee.

I am here today to strongly urge this Committee to defund the “Democracy Promotion” programs with respect to those programs operating in Cuba.

I have a personal, local interest in taking this stand – a Marylander named Alan Gross is in a Cuba prison for carrying out activities under this unwise and counterproductive program. Administration officials have called for his release as well as former President Jimmy Carter. In my recent visit to Cuba and in meetings with Cuban officials, I requested also Mr. Gross’ release on humanitarian grounds.

The activities funded under this program are illegal under Cuban law, and by continuing the funding for them in their current form we put innocent Cubans and vulnerable Americans at risk for no good purpose---like my fellow Marylander Mr. Gross.

Because of the complications with these programs in Cuba, this program has not produced concrete results. In fact, despite the expenditure of \$150 million since the inception, this program has not only failed to deliver but seems to be contrary to the way we need to be moving to improve and help our relations with Cuba and the Cuban people---people to people contact including educational and cultural exchange.

Further, we must redouble our efforts to strengthen our relationship with the Cuban people even if we don't agree with their government structure or the decisions of their government. This is the approach to democracy that we have taken in multiple other countries that present problem leaders humanitarian challenges and a dubious or nonexistent commitment to democracy.

I am thankful that Senator Kerry has taken a strong stand on the Senate side against continuing to invest in the programs until a full review of the program is complete. In a statement released by Senator Kerry he stated the following:

“We all hope the Cuban people achieve greater freedom and prosperity in the future consistent with their aspirations, and I have applauded the Administration's commitment to expand people-to-people contact between our two countries. There is no evidence, however, that the 'democracy promotion' programs, which have cost the U.S. taxpayer more than \$150 million so far, are helping the Cuban people. Nor have they achieved much more than provoking the Cuban government to arrest a U.S. government contractor who was distributing satellite communication sets to Cuban contacts. Before this \$20 million is committed, a full review of the programs should be undertaken and the Administration should consult with the Congress. The GAO, which has investigated fraud and abuse in these programs in the past, is already undertaking another investigation at my request into the legal basis and effectiveness of these operations.”

I urge this Subcommittee to cease funding this program in Cuba until there is justification and evidence that the program is working and helping the people it was set up to help. This is the least that taxpayers deserve within the expenditure of precious resources in difficult economic times. It is my hope that no other innocent American falls victim to these policies, like Mr. Gross and his family have fallen victim. Thank you for your time and consideration.