

U.S. Rep. Jo Ann Emerson (MO-08) reacted positively to the Obama Administration's announcement that more opportunities for American travel to Cuba will be forthcoming. The new rules will permit more academic research, educational travel, cultural travel and religious travel to the island nation 90 miles off the coast of Florida.

"People-to-people programs enable American citizens to be our best possible ambassadors to the Cuban people. They get to see firsthand what life is like in a free society and hear from Americans who live an existence very different from their own. These relationships help improve relations, strengthen our international understanding, and benefit trade opportunities for U.S. products in a significant market," Emerson said.

The new rules will also help Cubans and Cuban-Americans on a family level, permitting direct financial support to the Cuban people, fostering commerce, and increasing the number of U.S. airports which will provide service to Cuba.

"When families are split and then kept apart by the political differences between America and Cuba, we deny family members the chance to see their loved ones and to send part of their earnings home to help out the family members who remain behind. From a humanitarian standpoint, these changes are sensible and compassionate, and I am very glad the U.S. Treasury is going to make some changes," Emerson said.