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**For Immediate Release** Media Contact: Rebecca Climie manager@wmwta.org

# West Michigan World Trade Association

# Panel Discussion:

**“Is Cuba Really Open for Business?”**

GRAND RAPIDS, November 17, 2015 – The WMWTA will host a panelist discussion devoted to Cuba and international trade.

"Havana, Cuba: One bitter holdover of the Cold War slipped into the history books at 12:01 a.m. Monday (July 20, 2015), when the United States and Cuba re-established diplomatic relations. For the first time since severing ties in 1961, they reopened embassies in each other's capitals.

Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla traveled to the Cuban Embassy in Washington to raise his country's flag, an event that Cuban government officials said would be broadcast live on the island's state-run TV.

A Cuban delegation of diplomats, artists and veterans of the revolution commemorated the breakthrough with about 500 guests and more than likely down a few celebratory mojitos and shots of Havana Club rum.

U.S. diplomats in Havana have readied everything from new business cards to the embassy sign.

But the festivities and flag-raising will have to wait for Secretary of State John Kerry's visit -- the highest-level trip by a U.S. official to Cuba since the 1959 revolution -- for the embassy reopening ceremony in August." [***CNN***](https://westmichiganworldtrade.wildapricot.org/%20http%3A/www.cnn.com/2015/07/20/politics/cuba-u-s-embassies-opening/)

**But is Cuba really open for business? What does this mean for international trade? What is next and will our relations continue to improve? Join West Michigan World Trade Association as we discuss this hot topic.**

Panelists will include:

**Judy Kruger, Senior VP of International Sales for PRA Global:** After a recent trip to Cuba, Judy will share topics that the international business community is currently discussing in relation to Cuba, using data to explore the future opportunities and risks.

**David DeAvila, Vice President of International Development for Global Envy, Inc.:** A Cuban American and former MEDC Latin American Specialist, David will interweave personal stories and his family’s relationship to Cuba, discussing the significance of opening a low cost country for international companies.

**Andrew Schlewitz, GVSU Professor of Latin American Studies:** No stranger to Latin American politics, Andrew will share the political implications of military dictatorships and the economic opportunities and barriers that exist in Cuba today.

The discussion will be pertinent to businesses interested in expanding into Cuba, describing the steps that should be taken to ensure future success. International business executives, import and export suppliers, those specializing in logistics and shipping, sales directors and forecasters, financial risk managers, and those interested in Cuba at large are encouraged to attend. Complimentarily press credentials are available upon request.

The event will take place **Tuesday, November 17, 2015** at the **Grand Valley State University Eberhard Center** (301 Fulton W, Grand Rapids, MI 49504). Registration opens at 5:30 pm, along with networking and snacks. The Panel Discussion will begin at 6:15 pm followed by Q&A and closing remarks.

Space is limited. To reserve your place, please contact Rebecca Climie at manager@wmwta.org or (616) 301-0032. You can also register online at [www.wmwta.org](http://www.wmwta.org). The fee is $15 for WMWTA members and $20 for the general public. Special rates are available for students and corporate groups of six or more persons.

**About the West Michigan World Trade Association:** Founded in 1960 as a non-profit organization, the West Michigan World Trade Association is the longest serving local group dedicated to enhancing global competitiveness. Membership comprises both manufacturers and service providers (freight forwarders, customs brokers, logistics companies, tax experts, bankers, accountants, translation agencies, and lawyers) active in global commerce. In addition to offering cross-sector networking opportunities, the WMWTA arranges a series of presentations on contemporary topics related to the world marketplace.

For more information about the West Michigan World Trade Association, log on to [www.wmwta.org](http://www.wmwta.org/).

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