

# P R E S S   R E L E A S E



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – October 7, 2016**

**Contact:** Alex Hernández  
Public Information Officer

**Phone:** (985) 652-9278  
**Email:** [ahernandez@portsl.com](mailto:ahernandez@portsl.com)

## **PORT OF SOUTH LOUISIANA RETURNS TO CUBA TO SIGN MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**

Earlier this week, Port of South Louisiana Executive Director Paul G. Aucoin and Commission President D. Paul Robichaux traveled to Havana, Cuba on a follow-up trade mission led by Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards, the first one by a Louisiana governor since 2005. Approximately 50 state, regional, local, port, and private business leaders joined the mission including Louisiana Economic Development Secretary Don Pierson, Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development Secretary Shawn Wilson, and Louisiana Agriculture and Forestry Commissioner Mike Strain, who led a previous mission to Cuba in July.

During July's fact-finding mission to Cuba, delegates met with Cuban government and trade officials and toured the Port of Mariel. This time around, Governor Edwards was in attendance to sign a ports Memorandum of Understanding with Cuban officials to denote a ceremonial partnership between Louisiana and Cuba to expand trade and commerce. "...We want Louisiana to be first in line to any new opportunities with Cuba, particularly the import, export and foreign direct investment possibilities that could range into the billions of dollars in the coming years. For those reasons, we are eager to embark on this trade mission and to place Louisiana in a unique position of leadership with respect to Cuba," said Governor Edwards.

"We are pleased to have been given this opportunity to enter into this memorandum of understanding with the National Port Administration of Cuba (NPAC)," said Aucoin. "Now we can begin to exchange knowledge and ideas; a merging of the minds, if you will. When the embargo is lifted, we will be ready to fully engage in trade and commerce between Louisiana and Cuba."

This visit solidifies Louisiana as an advocate for free trade with Cuba. With Louisiana as home to five of the top 15 ports in the United States, Louisiana is ready to expand commerce with one of its closest neighbors and historic trading partners, a country that imports 80% of its food. The Port of South Louisiana is the largest grain exporter in the United States with seven grain elevators in its port district, some of which have exported 200,000 short tons of grain and flour to Cuba recently under a humanitarian exemption.



*Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards (with Port of South Louisiana Executive Director Paul G. Aucoin) signing MOUs with Cuba*



*Port of South Louisiana Executive Director Paul G. Aucoin (with Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards) signing MOUs with Cuba*

**About the Port of South Louisiana**

The Port of South Louisiana is a 54-mile port district on the Mississippi River between New Orleans and Baton Rouge, encompassing the parishes of St. Charles, St. John and St. James. The facilities located within the port's district consistently handle over a quarter billion short tons of cargo annually, ranking it the largest tonnage port district in the Western Hemisphere, the nation's greatest grain exporter, and the number one energy transfer port in the United States. Along the 108 miles of deep-water frontage on both banks of the river there are seven grain transfer facilities, four major oil refineries, 11 petrochemical manufacturing facilities and several other facilities for a total of more than 50 docks owned and operated by an impressive group of resident tenants such as ADM, ArcelorMittal, Dow, Cargill, DuPont, Motiva Enterprises, Marathon, Shell, Nucor Steel., Occidental, Valero, and Occidental Chemical. To learn more, visit us at [www.portsl.com](http://www.portsl.com), like us on [Facebook](#), and follow us on [LinkedIn](#).

###

For more information about this particular topic or about the Port of South Louisiana, contact Alexandra "Alex" Hernández, Public Information Officer, at 985-652-9278 or [ahernandez@portsl.com](mailto:ahernandez@portsl.com).