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April 30, 2013

The Honorable John F. Kerry  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I write on behalf of the American Political Science Association to request your support to facilitate visas for Cuban scholars who have been invited to participate in the XXXI International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association to be held May 29 to June 1, 2013 in Washington, D.C.

The American Political Science Association is a scholarly association which represents more than 14,000 U.S. and internationally-based professors and students of political science, including many whose research focuses on the politics of Latin America in comparative or international perspective.

The Latin American Studies Association (LASA) is the largest professional association in the world for individuals and institutions engaged in the study of Latin America. With over 8,000 members, 45 percent of whom reside outside the United States, LASA is the one association that brings together experts on Latin America from all disciplines and diverse occupational endeavors, across the globe. LASA's mission is to foster intellectual discussion, research, and teaching on Latin America, the Caribbean, and its people throughout the Americas, promote the interests of its diverse membership, and encourage civic engagement through network building and public debate.

While many Cuban scholars are LASA members, they are not always able to participate in the annual meetings. In 2004 the George W. Bush administration denied visas to all 61 Cuban scholars who had been invited to attend that year's meeting in Las Vegas, prompting the organization to move subsequent meetings outside the United States in protest.

As we noted in 2004, the American Political Science Association has historically been pleased to join with the government of the United States in support of academic freedom and in opposition to use of visa denials to suppress free intellectual exchange. When the International Political Science Association meetings were held in the United States in 1988 we had very positive exchanges with the Department of State in assuring that appropriate scholars from the former Soviet Union would be free to receive visas to enter the United States for scholarly purposes, and we have never lost sight

of how this occurred at a crucial time in the lead-up to that nation's peaceful transition to democracy.

While the recent return of the LASA International Congress to the United States and overall facilitation of Cuban scholars' participation signals a return to support for academic freedom and intellectual exchange, it has come to my attention that five Cuban scholars have already been denied visas to attend this year's meeting in May. These visa denials undermine the administration's policy of promoting academic exchange with Cuba. These exchanges have helped promote the free flow of ideas, information, and dialogue and have helped feed the desire for greater openness in Cuba. The visa denials are damaging to US-Cuban relations, they hurt Cubans who are seeking increased engagement with the United States and they are harmful to US scholars who have the right to learn from their Cuban colleagues.

I hope that as Secretary of State you will support LASA's endeavor to include our Cuban colleagues in democratic and scholarly debates.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane Mansbridge". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "J" that extends to the left.

Jane Mansbridge, President