

Press Release...



FROM THE OFFICE OF STATE REPRESENTATIVE LA SHAWN K. FORD

For Immediate Release:

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For More Information:

State Rep. La Shawn K. Ford

773 378-5902

Ford Returns to Cuba to Lead a Delegation of Elementary School Students

CHICAGO – Illinois State Representative La Shawn K. Ford, D-Chicago, will build on his 2011 trip to Cuba to help lead a youth delegation to Cuba from one of Chicago's premier social justice schools, Village Leadership Academy (VLA). The VLA's youth delegation will travel to Havana and Santiago de Cuba. The delegation will explore the unique history and culture of each region and engage with Cuban artists, entrepreneurs, educators, youth leaders, and rural residents to better understand the Republic of Cuba's emerging relationship with the U.S. and how imperialism, globalization, and sustained resistance have shaped Cuban culture and life.

On December 17, 2014, President Obama announced the beginning of a normalization process between the United States of America and Cuba, starting a new chapter in U.S.-Cuba relations. A major step in this process was reached on July 20, 2015, when Cuba and the United States reopened their respective embassies and reestablished diplomatic relations. The U.S. Embassy in Havana occupies the same building on the Malecón as it did prior to the severing of diplomatic relations. Even with the recent changes, the U.S. trade embargo with Cuba remains in place, and most transactions between the United States and Cuba continue to be prohibited. Since 2000, certain U.S. exports of agricultural goods and medical devices have been permitted.

"It is such an honor to work with VLA's Principal Nakisha H. Hobbs and her team of teachers on this historic journey," said Ford. "With all the violence in Chicago, Ms. Hobbs should be praised for her vision to make this experience possible for inner-city low-income African American students from the South and West Sides of Chicago."

For more information, contact one of Ford's constituent service offices: 816 S. Oak Park Avenue in Oak Park at [708-445-3673](tel:708-445-3673), 4800 W. Chicago Avenue in Chicago at [773-378-5902](tel:773-378-5902) or in the Stratton Office Building in Springfield at [217-782-5962](tel:217-782-5962), or visit www.lashawnford.com.

Who: 27 students from Village Leadership Academy's World Scholars Program will travel as a youth delegation to Cuba

What: VLA's students, administrators, teachers, and community partners, along with Illinois State Senator Toi Hutchinson and State Representative La Shawn K. Ford, will travel to Cuba as a delegation to promote critical cultural exchange and global youth leadership development.

Where: Havana & Santiago de Cuba, Cuba

When: June 16th – 23rd, 2016

Why: Due to the recent advancement in diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Cuba, the Republic of Cuba stands central to our understanding of globalization. Travel to Cuba provides unprecedented learning opportunities and cross-cultural exchange for VLA students, who are being shaped as global leaders of tomorrow, today.