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BRIDGING CUBA'S COMMUNICATION DIVIDE: EMPOWERING CUBANS THROUGH ACCESS TO NEW MEDIA & TECHNOLOGY

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. PICCONE: Good morning, everyone. Can you hear me? Now can you hear me? That's better.

My name is Ted Piccone. I'm a senior fellow and deputy director for foreign policy here at The Brookings Institution. Welcome. We're here on a bright, sunny July morning to talk about one of our favorite subjects: U.S.-Cuba relations, which maybe there's a cloud lifting and we'll see some progress going ahead, given recent events.

I'm here to welcome you on behalf of the Latin American Initiative here at Brookings, which is a joint project of Foreign Policy and the Global Economy and Development Programs. And I want to particularly thank the Cuban Study Group and the Council of the Americas, the Americas Society for leading this particular effort.

The topic today is "Bridging Cuba's Communications Divide: Empowering Cubans through Access to New Media and Technology." And I think this is a particularly timely topic in light of recent events on the island. The agreement of the Cuban government brokered by the Catholic Church and the government of Spain to release 52 political prisoners is a very positive step in the right direction. It's an example of the fruits of engagement where there is an active dialogue process underway where change is possible. It's also an example of the role of new technology in the development of some of the events around the release. Think about Yoani Sanchez and her work as a blogger and broadcasting the first pictures of Guillermo Farinas, the end of his hunger strike. Think about the use of cell phone cameras to take pictures of the harassment of the Damas de Blanco. I mean, this is beginning to take hold in Cuba and is an important factor in what's happening. It also, of course, we think of the Alan Gross case, which is related to this topic as well and remains a problem, and we will see what developments

take place in the future.

But it also, for many of us, raises the more general question of what life is really like in Cuba, not only for the 52 prisoners and Damas de Blanco, but also to the average Cuban citizen, who is largely absent from the modern communications revolution that is sweeping the globe and that we take for granted. And just to offer some statistics of the technology gap that Cuba faces: despite having the third highest research and development expenditures per GDP in Latin America, Cuba has the lowest level of Internet penetration in the hemisphere and one of the lowest in the world. Ownership of personal computers is even lower, roughly 6.2 percent of the population. Even fixed-line teledensity is one of the lowest in the hemisphere at 10.5 percent.

So in Cuba, the Internet, for example, is primarily accessible to very small groups: academics, government officials, foreigners, and tourists -- a growing number of tourists. So the lack of access is really the primary blocking tool used by the Cuban government to restrict technology to the population at large. Affordability is also a major hurdle for the average Cuban with cell phones costing more than, in many cases, the average monthly income of a Cuban citizen.

The Cuban government has tried various ways to block access, but there is a private underground market that's developing, and this is one of the fastest areas of growth on the island. And users in Cuba are finding other ways of getting around some of the access problems: satellite dishes being smuggled in or using computers available in the tourist hotels or in Internet cafés. Still, even when they do get access, connections are very slow. There are only 2,000 Internet broadband connections on the island, so access is through very slow dial-up connections.

So I think you get the general picture. The majority of Cubans have neither the means nor the access to enjoy the basic information lifestyle that we've grown

accustomed to, that greatly improves the quality of life for people, that drives economic growth and expands horizons across the board. And that's what we're here to talk about, what are some of the steps that could be taken to address that technology gap.

Let me introduce my co-panelists and they'll come up and say a few words, and then we'll open it up for question-and-answer.

We're first going to hear from Carlos Saladrigas, who is co-chairman of the board of the Cuban Study Group, which is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization comprised of business and community leaders of Cuban descent who share a common interest and vision of a free and prosperous Cuba. Carlos has a long career in the private sector as a business leader and also in the civil society, academic, and philanthropic community. And we're very pleased to have him here. He's been a close partner with the Brookings Project on U.S.-Cuba Relations.

And I also, secondly, want to introduce Chris Sabatini. Chris is the senior director of policy for the Americas Society and Council of the Americas, and editor-in-chief of the *Americas Quarterly,* which if you are not familiar with, you absolutely should be. It's really the cutting-edge journal that's covering hemispheric affairs, and is available, I think, on the newsstands today. And that's really largely due to Chris' leadership at the Council of the Americas. And Chris has a longstanding career -- before he went up to New York -- here in Washington at the National Endowment for Democracy and elsewhere. And we welcome him to Brookings as well.

Carlos.

MR. SALADRIGAS: Thank you, Ted, and good morning to all of you. You know, we truly appreciate Brookings' hosting of this session this morning and for all of you, all that we have collectively done here for the empowerment of the Cuban people. We at the Cuba Study Group are indeed proud and honored to collaborate with you and

with Chris and the Council of the Americas on this very, very important project.

In January of this year, the Cuba Study Group sponsored the Cuba IT and Social Media Summit, hosted by the Americas Society/the Council of Americas in New York. The goal of the summit was to identify ways to empower the Cuban people through technology so that they may acquire and share information and communicate with each other and with the outside world.

We concluded that our role outside of Cuba should not be to micromanage the Cuban people's use of technology or social media tools or to subvert the regime. On the contrary, we should focus on identifying ways to remove obstacles -- both internal and external -- which limit or restrict the Cuban people's access to these technology tools. To this end, more than 50 IT executives and experts who attended the summit organized themselves into 4 working groups to produce a comprehensive set of recommendations for private and public sector leaders.

The whitepaper that we are releasing today -- and there's a copy available outside for you -- is a summary and an endorsement of the conclusions and recommendations of these committees.

In our whitepaper we laid out a series of recommendations with the underlying premise that information has always been a liberating force. Throughout history, totalitarian and authoritarian regimes have always attempted to control it. Yet modern closed societies face a new kind of dilemma: that of information's usefulness to economic activity versus its liberalizing powers. Attempting to deal with this contradiction many modern authoritarian regimes have manipulated information by controlling the media rather than banning the information outright. For those regimes that seek to prioritize economic growth and economic development they are sort of forced to balance the liberating powers of technology and communications with the usefulness and the

necessity of this technology to remain competitive in today's globalized economy and the demands for this technology to conduct business and maintain competitiveness in the marketplace.

Cuba is not exempt from this challenge. Rather, as we see it, it is attempting -- right now as we speak -- it is attempting to balance these key concerns and to be able to move forward on many of these issues. Cuba needs to fundamentally reform its economy, but deeply fears the political impact of widespread access to these technologies. How it pursues this balance can be greatly facilitated or made difficult by U.S. policy towards Cuba.

We know that there is a strong correlation between access to technology and economic growth and development. In fact, I go a little bit further. It was perhaps thought that technology was sort of a byproduct of economic development. I think we're seeing today that technology is a requirement for economic development.

Conversely, the large investments require for greater technology and telecommunications infrastructure on the island will only take place when there is a revenue model to support the investment and provide investors with market-based rates of return. This has become exceedingly clear with cellular phones. As little as five years ago, there were just a few thousand mobile phones in Cuba, almost all of them in the hands of government officials, foreigners, and members of the elites. Since President Raul Castro's announcement in 2008 lifting the ban on cell phones, the number of cell phones has rapidly approached 1 million by the end of 2010. The reason is simple: Cell phone revenues have become an important source of hard currency and the economic benefit outweighed the political considerations.

It is unreasonable to expect the development of other types or other forms of information and communications technologies in Cuba, such as the Internet and

social media, without economic models to make them work and make them sustainable. Thus, the challenge for you as policymakers consists not only in implementing targeted reforms to permit some of these technologies, but also of broadly lifting all restrictions that hindered the development of the economic models that are necessary to sustain the growth and development of these technologies, and also to create the corresponding consumer demand for these services. Otherwise, we will just not see these technologies take hold in Cuba. A piecemeal approach will simply not do the job.

Last January, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton pointed to the long-term economic potential of the Internet, saying: We know from long experience that promoting social and economic development in countries where people lack access to knowledge, markets, capital, and opportunity can be frustrating and sometimes futile work. In this context the Internet can serve as a great equalizer. By providing people with access to knowledge and potential markets, networks can create opportunities where none exist. Given this logic, the U.S. should implement the necessary reforms to expand connectivity and access to technology in Cuba because doing so will go a long ways toward alleviating both the political and economic struggles of the Cuban people.

I, again, want to thank the Brookings Institution and the Americas Society/Council of the Americas for their collaboration on this whitepaper, and especially the over 50 IT and telecom executives of the Cuba IT and Social Media Initiative. Without their knowledge and support this project would not have been possible.

Thank you.

MR. SABATINI: First of all, Ted, thank you for your generous introduction. I do want to say, *Americas Quarterly* is real, but it is also -- it may be the only -- it may be the leading and cutting-edge journal on hemispheric relations. It is also the only. So the competitions' pretty slim, but thank you anyway.

I wanted to say, first, a little bit of background that Carlos and Ted alluded to. This initiative came together really for two reasons: one was the evidence of the growing access to Internet technology by dissidents inside the island, as Ted mentioned by Yoani Sanchez, the blogger, and her whole group -- Claudia Cadelo is another one -- and the use of video and phone technology on cell phones indicated the power of this; and then second of all, the regulatory changes that President Obama announced April 13th of last year. I'll talk about those in a second.

And as a result of that, we convened in Washington, over 50 telecommunications executives, activists, and scholars at the initiative of Carlos. And I think it's been a very good collaborative project among three people, three institutions. I think if anyone who believes that Cuba can be divisive, polarizing, and fraught with vitriol, I think our collaboration demonstrates that, in fact, you can find consensus over several points, especially when you talk about two key things: the need to change U.S. policy to be able to increase access to certain good within Cuba, and the need to do that with a mind towards the need to promote freedom and human rights and political opening inside Cuba.

As I mentioned, a large part of this initiative came out of the announcement by President Obama on April 13th of telecommunications regulatory changes and the expectation within the private sector and among a number of advocates on Cuba policy through the implications of that change. Initially, when President Obama made that announcement, he announced that the attempt was going to increase access to independent communication by Cubans outside the island. And in his initial statement he said they would authorize U.S. telecom providers to enter into agreement to establish a fiber optic cable and satellite telecommunications linking the United States and Cuba. Cuba does not actually have a fiber optic cable connecting to anywhere.

Second, license U.S. service providers to enter into roaming agreements with Cuban providers.

Third, license U.S. satellite radio and television providers to engage in transactions to be able to work in the Cuban market.

Fourth, license persons subject to U.S. jurisdiction to pay for telecommunications, satellite radio, and satellite television.

And fifth, authorize the export or re-export to Cuba of donated consumer products related to telecommunications.

Well, on September 3rd and September 8th, the Commerce Department and the Treasury Department finally issued the final regulations. And despite the very strong rhetoric of the Obama administration and its intentions to be able to improve access for Cubans to Internet technology, the regulations somehow in translation got tied in the welter of laws and sanctions that basically wrap around Cuba and have prevented any sort of change in Cuba.

Primary, what has happened is the regulations simply didn't go far enough. What has happened is they allow for roaming agreements, they allow for the establishment of a fiber optic cable, they allow for licensing with providers. What they don't allow for are two critical things.

The first thing is they don't allow for the sale or export of materials and equipment that could be seen as supporting Cuba's domestic telecommunications infrastructure, and that's critical. That's prohibited by a 1992 law called the Cuba Democracy Act that, again, prohibits any sort of export or even donation of material that could be construed to contribute to Cuba's domestic infrastructure, which means cell phone towers, routers, even includes -- for some reason -- handsets. You can't even sell mobile cell phones inside the island because it somehow has been construed to

constitute domestic infrastructure.

Not only can't you even sell that, you can't donate it. So if you guys have a cell phone tower in your house and you're thinking about donating it to Cuba or maybe a decoder for satellite TV and a satellite dish, just if you have one lying around, you can't donate it, so don't try. It is prohibited.

But last what this also prohibited was any sort of activity that was seen as linking these sorts of communications activities to the United States. The fiber optic cable, for example, there are provisions for the licensing of a fiber optic cable, for the laying of a fiber optic cable, but -- and people who are far more expert in this than me tell me that you can't actually just plug in a fiber optic cable like a toaster once it gets to Havana. You need a series of routers, you need equipment -- docking equipment and the like -- that is effectively prohibited by the current regulations.

All of which is to say these regulations basically fail to accomplish the primary objective of the Obama Administration, which was and should be always to provide independent citizens with the capacity, the tools to be able to communicate with their own people inside the island -- domestic infrastructure, if you will -- but also to communicate with those outside of the island.

And we did in this report, we talk about it. We did a thorough analysis comparing U.S. regulations concerning telecoms exports to other closed societies: Iran, Syria, Burma, and North Korea. What we found -- and Cuba, of course. What we found was actually despite many of these countries actually being legitimately on a terrorist list -- Syria included -- the telecommunications regulations are much stricter in Cuba than they are for Burma, Syria, and in some cases even Iran. Let me explain how.

In the case of Burma, the Commerce Department allows for the -- well, actually in the case of Syria, it says that, "U.S. exports to Syria of telecommunications

equipment and associated computers, software, technology, and telecommunications allows for the items necessary to promote the free flow of information, including computers, technology, and software that has been exempted from a policy of denial by the Commerce Department and BIS." The same policy of denial has been exempted for NGOs and non-sanctioned citizens in Burma. Even in the case of Iran, there's an allowance for export to third countries and the use of U.S. materials in third-country products that will allow for access to computers and technology inside Iran.

Which is to say, like many things -- and people here, like Fulton, who've worked on Cuba for a long time will not be surprised by this -- despite our high-minded intentions on Cuba, many of our Cuba policies remain stuck in almost not only an anachronism, but sort of an outsider role, far outside, far beyond our ability to be able to affect the sort of change that we want to.

With this, what's happened is that despite the initial enthusiasm and expectation announced by President Obama's telecommunications regulations, what's happened is a number of telecommunications companies have traveled to Cuba, they met with Cuban officials. A number of them can travel because the provisions do allow for telecommunications authorities and executives to travel to Cuba, but not if they're vendors or makers of infrastructure. So handset vendors cannot travel to Cuba; only people who can establish roaming agreements. And as you can imagine, given the limited potential and the long-term potential of Cuba, there's been a real dampening of enthusiasm over the potential of the private sector to be able to provide and serve as an engine for telecommunications inside Cuba given the way the regulations turned out.

With that, setting the stage of the regulatory restrictions, I'll turn it over to Ted, who will talk about the recommendations of the report. Many of them are detailed in this report.

Thank you.

MR. PICCONE: Thank you, Chris. And Chris, I think, helped lay out some of the complications around U.S. law and U.S. regulations on this. And we really are talking about a web of Cold War era rules that really hinder a modern type of policy on this. And I think the real question -- I mean, we're all -- and as a matter of U.S. law -- committed to the promotion of democracy and human rights in Cuba. And the big question is how? How do you do it effectively in a way that supports Cuban citizens and does not actually even further strengthen the regime? And I think mistakes have been made in the past.

And one way to think about this when it comes to technology is to really reframe the way we present this basket of the telecommunications side. You can think of it as a tool for empowering the Cuban people and promoting democracy and human rights, and certainly that language is very evident in President Obama's announcements last year on this. And, you know, very sympathetic to that point of view, but it does, in a sense, ask the telecommunications industry to serve as the instruments for what could be characterized as a regime change policy, and that makes for a pretty difficult operating environment.

My argument is that under U.S. law you could find another way of doing this, which is under some of the humanitarian provisions of the Cuban Democracy Act, which, if you look at a provision that's called support to the Cuban people, there are provisions around allowing the sale and export of food, of medicine, and of telecommunications. It allows for -- it authorizes telecommunications facilities that are efficient and adequate for services between U.S. and Cuba. And I think when we think of it in that light, then what it would lead to is an argument that says the President should promote rules that facilitate this kind of humanitarian, efficient, modern

telecommunications services between Cuba and the United States.

One way to do that is -- well, there's one obstacle to that, which is this provision that Chris mentioned, which does prohibit investment, U.S. investment, in domestic telecommunications network or infrastructure in Cuba. And that's really the challenge, I think, that we're facing is how one deals with that provision.

One way is to interpret it very narrowly and interpret it in a way that's consistent with the more humanitarian aspects of the legislation. So you could limit that provision or you could interpret it in such a way that minimizes the obstacle to investment in the network. For example, you could say that only actual construction, U.S. companies constructing telecommunication materials in Cuba is the problem. So there are ways around this with creative legal minds is my point there.

Let me mention a couple of the other recommendations that came out of the work that was done around this.

We are -- let me -- actually before I mention some of the specific recommendations, there's a bigger point that has to be made, which is that, you know, the real obstacle here, of course, is the government of Cuba. And, you know, as a signatory, for example, to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the government of Cuba is obliged to provide its citizens with freedom of expression and information, and that is being denied. But there's not much we actually can do about that from the United States. But what we can do here in the United States is get out of the way, minimize the red tape and the interference, and all the U.S. actors -- both public and private sector actors -- and philanthropists and business community to engage in transactions that will bring these kinds of new technologies to the island. I think it's important to make clear what space we're talking about here.

So in terms of what the -- what we think the President and Congress can

do, frankly, I'm a skeptic on what Congress is able and willing to do because of the politics. And we can talk about that further in the Q&A. You know, there's a lot of effort right now to get the travel ban lifted and agricultural exports expanded, and there's some small progress on that front and some hope that maybe -- particularly with the events of this past week -- there might be some momentum going forward.

But there are things that President Obama can do without waiting for Congress to act, and these include, again, revising the regulations further with a much more liberalizing attitude. You could authorize more flexible end-user requirements to allow for the sale of prepaid phone cars and mobile phones in Cuba. You could expand the scope of investments that U.S. companies can make to establish greater communications links. Allow the creation of new revenue models to allow U.S. companies to contract Cuban computer engineers and software developers for their services to develop new applications, products, and software that are particularly useful to Cuba. Allow U.S. persons and companies to export the equipment necessary to receive and decode satellite TV and radio signals, like DirecTV.

Other things: Exploring catalogue-free, low bandwidth versions of online software and social media applications that can be safely downloaded by Cubans on the island for local use. And these, by the way, are also things that the private sector can help with, particularly once the government kind of gets out of the way a little bit.

Support existing social media applications that are particularly popular in Cuba. And one in particular that we talk about in the report is Revolico, which is used by -- I think the statistic we have is over 8,000, which is small, but a growing number of people use this as kind of like an online community board and exchange service.

There are other things that we could do to promote web-based proxies and anonymous Twitter relays for people, particularly this is relevant as we've learned

from the experience of Iran for people in closed societies like Cuba.

There are things that the philanthropic community could do and corporations. For example, scale up donations of ICT products and services, a technology access platform would be useful. The idea of one laptop per child -- you know, Cuba prides itself in its education system. And yet in the modern world, computers and access to the Internet is so basic in our own view of how education works and I think this is a critical missing ingredient in the Cuban education system and is going to leave them way behind when it comes to a more open system for Cuba. So it's important that they start catching up.

So those are just some of the ideas that we've laid out in the materials. And why don't we now open it up to some Q&A, which we will take from here? Just give us a second to set up and we'll have some microphones.

Okay. Do you have any comments before we start?

Okay. And yes, Jean? A microphone is coming over. Please identify yourself and -- go ahead.

MS. ROGERS: Hi. I'm Jean Rogers with the Center for International Private Enterprise.

Ted, I wanted to come back to your invitation for discussion topics in the Q&A, which is looking at the recommendations that you have, some of them are obviously politically sensitive and going to get caught up in a lot of debate. Some of them, on the face of it, seem fairly straightforward. Which of these do you think are likely to be on the agenda for change? How possible is it for some of these to happen?

MR. SALADRIGAS: Well, you know, I would hope that we are beginning to see a fundamental change in how U.S. policy focuses on Cuba. For years we have had a policy that's been obsessed -- and I want to emphasize the word "obsessed" -- with

damaging the Cuban regime, even when it causes collateral damage to the people and it has caused collateral to the people. I think we need to begin to focus to understand that it is ultimately the Cuban people who are going to be someday actors of their own change, protagonists to their own change. And that the best we can do from the outside, whether it's the U.S. or Spain or Europe or anywhere else, is to foster an enabling climate for change to occur in Cuba and for the people in Cuba to be empowered with information, with resource of the contact to be able to do their own things when the time comes for the Cuban people to do that. And nowhere is this more important than in information technology. I mean, information is necessary not only for Cuban people to look towards political change, but it's also essential for the Cuban economy to make and implement the reforms they need to bring about the wealth creation and the processes of productivity that are so essential to the Cuban economy.

So I think basically there is a message in this whole report is that the U.S. needs to get out of the business of micromanaging the Cuban transition and let the Cuban people take over, and that the focus of our policy ought to be to empower the Cuban people to be truly the protagonists of their own change.

MR. SABATINI: If I can just add, Jean, the -- I agree with Carlos. I think there's -- you know, the mentality has often been on Cuban policy to -- sort of the scorched earth policy that, you know, if it in any way helps the Cuban government, even if it hurts the Cuban people, we should not engage in it. And it's not a zero sum game. There will be beneficiaries on both sides, but I think we need to think about ultimately the Cuban people and empowering them, even if it does mean, you know, improving the lives and -- of -- and even some of the revenue for the Cuban government, that's -- it shouldn't.

And so the question is how you can affect this change? And actually this is really within the scope of executive authority. This doesn't require a congressional

change. We saw this when President Obama made the announcement on April 13th. And so the argument, in large part, on this -- and it's also the argument that Ted has made in an earlier Brookings report -- is that, you know, the embargo's not monolithic. And absent the ability to move this forward in the Congress, there is substantial scope for executive authority to increase, almost, you know, just drive a hole in the travel ban through cultural and educational exchanges. There can be substantial scope for improving the ability of U.S. businesses to be able to travel, represent, and even sort of make some initial marketing and forays into Cuba.

All those things can be done basically -- I don't mean to simplify it -- with a stroke of a pen. And I think we've seen even with, you know, going all the way back to President Clinton when he lifted or expanded the scope for cultural and educational changes, those can be done with a minimal amount of backlash. I mean, April 13th announcement, other things, everyone waited for the President to burn in effigy on Calle Ocho, and it never happened. I'm astounded, I'll be honest -- perhaps a little too frank here -- but I'm astounded by the lack of political courage sometimes to tackle these things when they could be done very easy legally and I think far easier politically than people realize.

MR. PICCONE: Now, I would just add I totally agree with Chris that this is a question of political will. And the President has the authority to take a number of steps. And, you know, we've heard from some folks in the administration that the legal advice they're getting is telling them that they actually don't have room to maneuver. But we also know from precedent during the Clinton Administration that a number of steps were taken under current law to liberalize trade and contact between Cubans and Americans, and no one questioned then whether this was legal or not.

So I think there is a political problem we have that a minority voice -- and

a minority voice even within the Cuban-American community. I mean, this is what's so interesting. There's a new poll that just came out this week, University of Miami, Andy Gomez was involved in -- that showed that over I think 60 percent of Cuban-Americans support lifting the travel ban unilaterally. So there's -- we're way behind in catching up with where the body politic is on this and, you know, it's time for a change.

More questions. In the back here.

MS. AYUSO: Thank you. Silvia Ayuso, correspondent for the German Press Agency as a former correspondent in Cuba, a victim as well of the Internet limits there. So I have three short questions.

You said one thing is -- you were talking about the steps the U.S. could take. But my question is given that you've been with companies that have had contact with the Cuban government how willing would be really the Cuban government to let these American companies work there? How far the Alan Gross case that you mentioned in the beginning might dissuade American companies given the prominence he's had with that? And what happens with these Venezuelan fiber optic cables that they should be working maybe in a year's time? How could this change the whole situation?

Thank you.

MR. SALADRIGAS: Well, you know, quickly, I think the Alan Gross case goes exactly to what we're saying, that the U.S. Government should not be in the business of micromanaging these changes in Cuba, but we just need to get out of the way. Get out of the way and let the markets like the private sector take over and let the Cuban people take over and move these technologies.

Once we -- this has opened up, of course, you know, no one can force the Cuban government to contract with this firm or that firm. That needs to be left to happen and it needs to be left to market forces.

There are a lot of reasons why the U.S. and the proximity to the U.S. market and the technology is important, and a lot of the funding that will come to support this consumer market for that technology is clearly coming from Miami. And so there is a significant amount of pent-up demand in the new economy that is emerging between Cuba and Miami. There is a whole new -- people are looking at it like the kind of economies that develops in border towns between Tijuana and San Diego and Los Angeles. And that sort of reality is emerging in a very significant way between Cuba and Miami. So that's one aspect of the whole thing that I think is critical is the remove-obstacles phase is more important than -- there is not much we can do to force anyone to come to a table or to do anything. But removing obstacles and getting out of the way and stop being an impediment to the development of all of these technologies I think is something that is critical.

MR. PICCONE: Venezuela and the fiber optic?

MR. SALADRIGAS: Well, you know, there is a fiber optic cable, if I'm not mistaken, that goes through the northern coast of Cuba and then turns around and goes to Yucatan, that connecting to that is not a significant or expensive proposition. But it's -- you know, if you look at U.S. regulations today, you can lay any infrastructure open until you are within X-miles of the Cuban shore, but you cannot go any further, but the technology is there. Of course, there is this talk about Venezuela doing it, but, you know, a lot about Venezuela is nothing but just that, just talk. So we need to see how all of that develops.

But the cable -- there is a cable very close to Cuban shore right now and connecting to it would not be a major undertaking.

MR. SABATINI: I'll just say a few things. One is whether the Cuban government would allow this and what businesses are -- that are traveling to Cuba, what

they're hearing from the Cuban government. And you hear mixed signals. Some of them say that there is some receptivity from the government on several of these issues. Several say that, you know, they're very suspicious. We don't really know.

I mean, the truth is we've tied the hands of U.S. businesses so much that -- and also in a process that is, for now -- although it's getting more transparent. We've been meeting with USG folks for a while now and they are feeling much more sort of streamlined in this process. But, you know, we really don't know what the Cuban government will be allowed to do because the U.S. Government -- the U.S. businesspeople, their hands are so tied.

There's one thing that they probably would do, and there's been a little bit of interest on this, is roaming agreements, primarily because it would actually --

MR. PICCONE: Because they're very close to Miami, right.

MR. SABATINI: They'd get a lot of money. Yeah, they would be able to impose a very heavy tax on those. So that's something that probably could be done and will be done.

On the issue of Alan Gross, I just want to echo Carlos' point is, you know, does it change it? Does it color it? The truth is, you know, this would be done without all of the overblown and offensive rhetoric of regime change. This is simply about connecting people when you put it in the hands of the private sector, which is, in many ways, where it should be. And again, I want to emphasize, which is where it is when it comes to Syria, Burma, and in some cases, in a limited way, in Iran. Again, in Burma and Syria you can sell computers and all these things to non-sanctioned individuals and NGOs.

Last, on Venezuela, I think clearly it's more in line with the Cuban government's thinking. It wants to have a fiber optic cable with Venezuela because

there's a certain synergy, let's say, in their attitude towards controlling the flow of information. But I don't think we can sort of let that be a distraction nor should it be an incentive for us to rush ahead and do it.

But as Carlos said -- and I hear it's progressing, but, you know, we see a lot of examples of failed Venezuelan projects: Banco del Sur, as far as I know, hasn't made a loan yet. The -- so I wouldn't bank on that. I wouldn't be hugely distracted by it.

MR. PICCONE: There's another question in the back and then I'll come up.

MS. SPECK: I have a question about the Cuban government's reaction.

MR. PICCONE: Can you introduce yourself?

MS. SPECK: I'm sorry. I'm Mary Speck. I'm an independent journalist. And -- because there's no reason why Cuba couldn't have done this with other international partners had they any interest, is there? And the opening with the political prisoners doesn't necessarily, as we all know, mean that there's any interest in a political opening. In fact, it could signal the opposite: You open a little bit and then you clamp down. That's what history would suggest they would do.

So we've analyzed at great length -- at some length the political implications of this in Washington and the political obstacles, but I wish you'd go a little bit more into the obstacles in Cuba.

MR. PICCONE: Well, that, as I said, is really the primary problem that we face. And I think, you know, Carlos' point about revenue models, that this is probably where there could be some traction with the regime. The economic situation is very bad. And I think when it's understood that there need to be some kind of movement that are win-win solutions, I mean, I think that's a mentality shift that we have to make here as Chris pointed out and move from this scorched earth kind of approach to something that

actually looks at the --

SPEAKER: Cost-benefit.

MR. PICCONE: -- net benefit of these transactions do serve what the U.S. interests are on the island, even if it might mean that there would be some increased revenue to the Cuban regime. I mean, this is a tradeoff that it's probably time to make, and I think that's where you might get some interest from the Cuban government.

MR. SALADRIGAS: That is exactly right. And I think the cell phone store in Cuba is a perfect example of this, you know, with just 20- or 30,000 a few years ago, now close to a million. The only -- you know, I don't have an ability to read the minds of the Cuban leaders, but from what it is obvious in looking at it from the outside is that the economic aspects of these technologies outweigh the political considerations.

And there has been political impact. I mean, when the Ladies in White were beaten up on the streets, pictures of that circulated around the world in a matter of minutes thanks to the cell phones equipped with cameras and the ability to upload those things quickly and send them as text messages and all.

So there -- all of these technologies -- I clearly remember at the summit, you know, a Harvard professor that came it and says, look, the technology is neutral. The technology helps the people, but it also helps the regime in many, many ways to continue to censor and clamp down and so forth. How it -- this process takes place, the one thing we know is that it cannot be micromanaged, much less from Washington. You just have to let it happen.

And what we have seen in country after country -- and Chris alluded to the comparative analysis was made of all these other closed societies -- in country after country, on the imbalance over the long term, that technology falls -- the weight falls in favor of the people. And that's what we are trying to say here, is to remove the obstacles

that allow for these technologies to flow, to take hold in Cuba. And without an economic model, they will not. I mean, it's simple, factual: without economic models to sustain them, these technologies are not going to flourish anywhere.

So we need to remove the constraints that prohibit the economic models to exist around these technologies. Then the technologies will develop.

The United States doesn't have a monopoly on all of these technologies. In fact, we can look at Iran and we can look at Syria and we can look at North Korea. We can look just about anywhere. They can buy the technology from other sources, from other countries, and many have, even in spite of U.S. sanctions. So it just shows the futility of unilateral sanctions, which simply just do not work.

But in many, many ways the U.S. has two things that I think are competitive advantages for our technology providers here. One is that our technology is far more cutting-edge and more modern than other nations, and much more up-to-date. And number two, we could help spark up the development of the economic models a lot sooner than Italian investment or Spanish or anybody else could do. And I think those two are critical issues, very, very important.

For instance, I can only think -- I'm an iPhone user. I can only think of the creativity of the Cuban people if they were allowed to develop iPhone software and sell it in the Apple store and be paid for that and have -- don't have the U.S. Government be the stopping point, the wall that prevents these people individually from being paid for the development of this software and these technologies.

There are many ways we can empower the Cuban people and I think lifting the obstacles, lifting the walls that we have built around Cuba is the best way to let these things happen. But we cannot micromanage them. We cannot force things to be outweighed the way we like them. We just have to let things take their course, and I think

this has been a very important lesson in the other closed societies that we have looked at. And I think we need to allow the same forces to play here.

MR. SABATINI: There are just two quick answers to your question. The first is that we don't know how the Cuban government will -- it will definitely try to control anything, but why is the U.S. blocking? I mean, that's up to the Cuban government. The U.S. should just get out of the way. And the problem here is U.S. laws. We don't know how the Cuban government -- I think if you don't cloak this and it should not be cloaked because it's not about regime change, this is about giving people access to technology so they can improve their own lives and communicate.

There's a second issue, though, which is why I think the Cuban government would be wise to allow some of this. And I've talked to businesses and one that wants to cell prepaid cell phones inside Cuba, and it was shot down by Treasury. But it's the huge potential of communication with relatives across the Florida Straits. That's a market that, you know, the Spanish, the French, the Italians can't necessarily compete with. You know, that -- we have an advantage and be able to sell in that way that, I think, would -- provides an incentive and a market that doesn't exist by the other carriers.

MR. SALADRIGAS: But there is a compelling reason for the Cuban government to do something about this, and that's the need for technology to facilitate economic growth and economic development. When they decide to get -- you know, to finally do something about their failed economic system -- and there's not other way to describe it. It's an absolute and unequivocal failure, and they know it. We're not talking about anything that they don't know and they don't know well. When they finally decide to do something about it, this going to be hugely critical-- hugely critical -- to the success of the new Cuban economy and a developing new Cuban economy.

Technology is critical today to business. We have seen it in Dubai. When we look at the economic miracle of some of the states around the Gulf, we can see the impact of technology in that development and that growth. It used to be that people used to think of technology as a byproduct of economic development, but it's not. It's almost a requisite. It's a necessity. And for the Cuban people whose primary asset in a new globalized economy is going to be its human talent because there is no better asset in Cuba -- far better than the beaches or anything else that you can think of, that human talent -- that can only be unleashed and can only be made productive through an expansive use of technology.

So there is a significant incentive on the Cuban government to open up, to close the gap that Ted alluded to in its educational system where Cuban children are being -- you know, this is a growing gap in technology in terms of educational processes. That needs to be closed. That needs to be filled. And I think lifting these obstacles Is the fastest way to get the things moved.

MR. PICCONE: There's a question here in the front.

MS. DEARBORN: Hi. Lindsay Dearborn. I'm a journalist and I also travel legally to Cuba with an export license.

Not directly from my mouth to God's ear, but sometimes I think perhaps I'd rather get arrested in Korea because it'll be in the news every day and that handsome Bill Clinton will come and get me. (Laughter) Why is Alan Gross being completely ignored?

A government-funded nonprofit that I am affiliated with here was just -- lost their grant, you know, lost their entire grant; was shut down after Alan Gross. And they had been going there and giving music equipment and computers to the younger people.

My question really is what is really going on, if anyone can actually say? It doesn't make sense that we're ignoring Alan Gross. So people in the audience listening to you -- and I'm loving that you're doing this -- pretty much were going, well, I don't want to go there and do this anymore because I'll be sitting there for a year in prison. Why is he being ignored? There's something going on that we're not being told obviously.

MR. SABATINI: I don't know. (Laughter) I wish I knew. It is a mystery to me, I'll be honest. I thought it was going to be a bargaining chip. It's unclear what they're bargaining for. It's unclear why they're doing it. Clearly it was intended to try to close down the AID program and embarrass this administration. They've done that. I think it's a shame, I'll be honest. I think it is -- the fact that he hasn't even been charged should be really front and center.

I actually do think journalists didn't cover it well when it occurred. I was actually appalled that suddenly people were digging around for, well, could he be CIA or not? And the point is, you know, we may not like the program -- it's overfunded, it's cloaked in all this ridiculous rhetoric -- but the truth is a man's being held in prison without even charges and here's being held in a deteriorating health condition, yet American.

SPEAKER: (inaudible; speaking without microphone)

MR. SALADRIGAS: Yeah. And, you know, please don't make -- don't get -- don't walk away with the impression that we don't care. Of course we do care very much about this gentleman and his family and what he's going through. So it is a very important issue.

But, you know, I think precisely because of that, the types of things that we're recommending here is all overt, so transparent and clear. And that's why we need to do and let the things move to Cuba in a very open way.

You know, it's more about removing obstacles than about micromanaging these things. The more the U.S. Government tries to micromanage, I think, the less effective everything is going to become. It's a question of allowing America's civil society to open up to Cuba and let America's civil society take the things. You know, there are plenty of NGOs that are very willing to openly distribute this kind of equipment in Cuba. You know, Felice Gorordo back there, he's one of the founders of Raíces de Esperanza, they have an incredibly effective program where people donate old cell phones and they get refurbished and then they are sent to Cuba free as a donation. They're being accepted. There is nothing wrong with that. There is nothing illegal with that in Cuba. It's open, it's available, it can be done.

Civil society -- if there is one asset to the United States it's its vast, powerful, rich, enormous civil society. All we need to do is let it open up to Cuba and let people do their thing.

You know, of course, I'm a conservative. I believe in privatization. And this is a perfect example where we ought to privatize this Cuban business. Let private people do this. Let private organizations do this. Let private businesses do this. You know, not being offensive to bureaucrats, but bureaucrats are not good at doing these things.

MR. PICCONE: I mean, just one last (inaudible) more questions, but --

MR. SABATINI: Bureaucrats are some of my best friends, though.

MR. SALADRIGAS: I know. I know.

MR. PICCONE: I mean --

MR. SALADRIGAS: I have some good friends.

MR. PICCONE: It is a particularly difficult case. And I think the danger would be that the case is held up as the next hurdle that -- you know, we're not going to

engage in any kind of dialogue with Cuba on all of these wide range of issues that need to be addressed until you act on the case. That's one approach, right?

I don't think that would be the wise course. And so I think the administration obviously is very concerned about the case and Secretary Clinton spoke about it just yesterday, appealing to American Jewish groups to speak up more on his behalf, which I think is a very interesting statement on her part. So it's certainly of concern, but I don't think it should be held -- you know, the whole relationship be held hostage to this one case.

I think the problem is when it's the U.S. Government that is funding this kind of work versus private sector NGOs. I think that's where we can draw a line.

All right. We have several hands up, so why don't we take a few at a time? Here, here, and then here.

MS. MENDOZA: Hi. My name is Celia Mendoza from the Research Department of the Inter-American Development Bank.

And I am collaborating in the writing of a book chapter that is devoted to understanding the link between advances of ICTs and financial inclusion. For example, mobile banking through cell phones. And I would like to know if you have any knowledge about the development of that financial service and, particularly, if it has benefited people that are un-banked. I mean, they don't have access to banks maybe because they live in remote areas or they're very poor.

MR. PICCONE: Okay, thank you. The gentleman right here.

MR. RIFAMORA: Joe Rifamora from AFP, Agence France-Presse.

I find it very interesting the proposition you keep saying, let's open this to the civil society. But don't we have to a risk precisely because of this vast civil Cuban -- civil society in the United States with very deep and strong links with the Cuban people?

Don't we have the risk to have several Alan Gross cases?

I guess if you refurbish cell phones and you sent them to Cuba and that is authorized, there's no problem. But imagine if we have people just trying to smuggle TV equipment, sophisticated equipment precisely because it's easier probably from the United States to try to do that. I mean, could that problem be reproduced in a much more important scale?

MR. PICCONE: One more right here.

MR. ASAMEI: Kaniko Asamei, concerned private citizen.

So my question is regarding the same case, Alan Gross. If according to Mr. Sabatini, satellite decoder donation is prohibited under U.S. law. Was he breaking the U.S. law? So I'm interested in not breaking the U.S. law. I'm interested in making donations. So under which authority could I make that?

MR. PICCONE: Okay.

MR. SABATINI: I'll go first and I'll answer the questions. We don't know what effects cell phone technology is having and sorting of banking on that because there really is no right to having private banks and their private bank accounts in Cuba. We do talk about -- and, in fact, a shameless plug for the next issue of *Americas Quarterly* -- we talk about sort of what cell phones are doing to promote access to health care and other things. It's a growing area. And, again, I think it points to, you know, there's clearly a lack of infrastructure on the Cuban side for these sorts of things, whether it's in banking or finance, health care, and the like. But, again, I think it speaks to the importance to getting cell phones and mobile technology in people's hands so that when that can happen, people can link up with a market and be able to sort of communicate with health care providers in rural areas and also be in to gain some sort of financial link.

How that's happening across the Florida Straits, I don't know. I'll let

Carlos talk about that.

MR. SALADRIGAS: You know, there is a significant number of the Cuban population who is banking today, who has bank accounts and so forth. The biggest roadblock to this technology is download speed and transmission speed. And all of these applications require quite a bit of speed and data capacity, and there's no infrastructure in Cuba for that. So that's going to take longer to -- but I don't know the facts; it's something that's very interesting.

I don't even know what -- how this is going in other parts of the world in terms of giving banking access to the poor and so forth. I just don't know.

MS. MENDOZA: (inaudible) there's a new development in banking (inaudible, speaking without microphone).

MR. SALADRIGAS: Right. But clearly that's the way everything is going. And this is why removing these obstacles and allow Cuba to catch up in terms of this technology is going to be important, you know. And the proof of the pudding is that many other closed societies have understood this dilemma of the need to have this technology available for economic development and the concerns as to how do I continue to exercise political control. And almost all of them have opted for allowing the technology for the need of economic development. And then once the tool is available, then it's up to the people how they use it for political and other purposes.

MR. SABATINI: Okay. And I'll answer the other question. On the civil society, a million different Alan Grosses or the possibility for more Alan Grosses, I think, again, I think it's difficult for a government to arrest businesspeople who are going there to do business. I think if you remove the stigma and the shadow of regime change and U.S. Government funds, I think that helps tremendously.

And to say that is not to blame the U.S. Government for doing this. I

mean, the Cuban government's fully responsible for arresting Alan Gross. But, you know, if you remove all this and simply let actors play out in ways that they should, I think it makes it much more difficult.

And then I just want to answer your question. The question -- the short answer is you can't. The U.S. regulations don't allow you to donate equipment that can be interpreted to be used for domestic infrastructure. Now, you can donate other equipment: cell phones and those sorts of -- and computers. But anything that can be construed as, like, a cell phone tower, building the capacity of Cubans to be able to communicate inside the island with themselves, can't do it.

MR. SALADRIGAS: But, of course, you cannot expect donations to solve that problem because they won't. Only market economics are going to develop that infrastructure.

You know, one thing that I like to add here, Ted, is the whole issue -- you know, I think there is a wide recognition in the United States that the Cuban government imposes an information blockade on its people. And almost everyone -- I think everybody understands and appreciates that.

We have spent millions of taxpayers dollars on trying to break that information blockade through radio and Tele Martí and other means, which, you know, not incredibly high amount of effectiveness. And yet we have all these laws and regulations that preclude information from flowing to Cuba and we prevent our own people who are the best carriers of information from going to Cuba. That just doesn't jive. It just doesn't make sense.

MR. PICCONE: Why don't we take another round of question and then we'll wrap it up? I see a hand over here. Are there any others?

MS. SHEPHERD: Hi. My name is Autumn Shepherd. I'm working with

the Air Force Office of Special Investigations. I do the Americas Division.

First and foremost, my question is you're talking about Alan Gross and situations like that. How are we looking at setting up an infrastructure for telecommunications exchange in a country we have no diplomatic relations? When you open the gates -- floodgates for the private sector to operate, clearly there's going to be issues where they butt up against the government, they butt up against private other governments and citizens. If we have no diplomatic relations formally, we have no venue to protect our own interests and our own people whether they get into a situation which is international issues or just private and domestic issues. That's the first.

Second, I wanted to bring up a point, for Cuba the entire government -- and a lot of Communist governments -- are built on blocking that information to their people. The entire government is built on hating the Yankee institutions. So I can't understand how we -- we understand from our culture how information is so part of our culture as a market economy. It is the exact opposite in Cuba. In a country where you're still passing out bags of rice and counting people in the neighborhood to make sure you don't have one extra person taking rice they're not supposed to have, you have an environment that it doesn't work off of the American model. So to try to use the American model to build this infrastructure in Cuba is not going to work very well.

We need to look at it from another perspective such as working with Cuba's allies. For example, China would be a great tool to use to work with Cuba, to open that telecommunications. Anything we do -- because their entire government's built to hate us -- anything we do is going to be construed as the institutions by the Yankee government, whether it's private, it will become government. You send private organizations; they're now CIA operatives. And then we have this Alan Gross situation.

So if you could -- I know it was kind of drawn out, but if you could help

me a little bit with that. Thank you.

MR. PICCONE: It's a good question. Right here, Fulton.

MR. ARMSTRONG: Hi. I'm Fulton Armstrong, Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

On the political will thing, it's a great topic. It gets at what the young lady was just saying now and Mary Speck's question a little while ago. It's really not our issue to worry about how they're going to respond. It's our issue with what we put out there.

But I would point out that when you look at the history of this relationship, we've put something on the table, even something that apparently would be unacceptable to them. Except for postal -- direct postal relations, they have accepted every single thing that we've put on the table, including, of course, sending huge amounts of Cuban-Americans down, which is a very subversive -- one would think a very subversive influence on the island, and cultural exchanges and baseball exchanges and stuff like that. So I'm not really sure.

The answer probably is that they'll accept what you're offering, but I'm not really sure whether we should limit ourselves by what they would accept or not. And, frankly, if they seemed too anxious to get it, it might hurt us politically up here.

On the U.S. political will, I think just two little observations. One, you're really not asking for anything that the U.S. Government -- except for the infrastructural stuff on the Cuban side of the switch -- that the U.S. Government's not already doing through its regime change programs. Our committee and our House counterpart committee did a thorough -- we used the word "investigation," but it sounds punitive -- a thorough review of those programs.

And almost everything that you're doing, the U.S. Government is doing, but through selected channels: people that have particular -- I mean, if you look at the

AID website, until very recently it was for the purpose of regime change. And the recipients on the other side also were hand-selected by Americans working for the United States Government.

And so if -- I think that Carlos and Chris, your themes of getting the U.S. Government out of the way is really a very positive theme because we are doing all of this stuff already.

Oh, and the second comment is on the legislation. The legislation on the political will, legislation right now I think your analysis of what's happening in the House is very accurate, it's very powerful, very significant gestures and stuff like that. But those of us that are working in the legislative area have a lot of difficulty when the Executive Branch runs up into obstacles on their own authorities, they don't exploit -- well, some of them are self-imposed -- they don't exploit all of the authorities that they have. And when they're offered more authorities by the Congress or they say that they want more authorities and then people go to them, they don't really support us. And I think that if the administration were to give a strong signal that it wanted measures to happen in the legislative area, a lot more could happen.

Yes, comment? Final comments?

MR. SABATINI: Reactions to Autumn's comments. One is the question of sort of not having sort of a commercial attaché or diplomatic relations and what that means. I don't mean to sound flip, but, you know, this is sort of -- the sort of business risk that businesspeople take all the time. You have, you know, investor cowboys in every country, whether it was Vietnam before the embargo was lifted, China today, whatever. Let the businesses calculate that risk.

You know, if I were an investor, I may be a little bit risk-adverse. I probably wouldn't be investing in Cuba because of you don't have any sort of commercial

attaché, who can help you negotiate that stuff.

But, you know, as we know, Cubans like to talk a lot. You've seen Fidel give long speeches. You've seen a few Cuban-American congressmen give very long speeches on the floor of the Congress. This could be a very profitable venture in terms of roaming, for example. (Laughter) So, you know, I would actually want a piece of that action per minutes. So let businesspeople decide. There's a risk. There's always a rule of law risk. It's certainly greater in Cuba. But I think, you know, that always enters into the calculation.

The second on the Venezuela aspect and also you mentioned China. China's actually involved in the Venezuela fiber optic cable. It's actually Alcatel China, which my colleague made a very good joke yesterday. They probably should change it to Alvatel China since it's Venezuela that's doing it.

The -- but I actually -- and here I don't mean to sound paranoid or conspiracy theory-oriented, but I am reluctant to let the Chinese be involved in a lot of these things. First because, you know, U.S. businesses should get their toe in the door, but also because it's China, it's Venezuela. These are governments, regimes that are actually trying to control information. They're masters at it. They're providing advice to the Cuban government how to do it. And I think it's precisely for that reason that good, old U.S. ingenuity and private sector that actually does operate in an environment where governments don't control information should be trying to operate in there.

MR. SALADRIGAS: You know, I think it's a question of seizing opportunity. And the more likely market opportunity exists with the United States primarily for the reason that -- and I mentioned this earlier, the huge connectivity between the Miami exile economy and the economy on the island. And so that gives an advantage, a competitive advantage, to you as providers of information and U.S.

technology.

I agree with Chris that, you know, businesses have a phenomenal way of dealing with all of those risks that you mentioned in terms of lack of diplomatic relations. And all that happens is that it gets reflected in the price of the services. This is why while those risks exist, Cubans are going to be paying a substantially higher price for these services than we pay in the United States so that other people will pay. And that will continue.

But soon that same factor does not escape the attention of Cuban leaders. You know, they know that risk increases the cost of capital and it makes capital more expensive in Cuba. So eventually if they truly want to have economic development of the kind that Cuba needs, they're going to have to deal with that fact and they're going to have to take measures to lower the risk of capital and, therefore, lower the cost of capital.

Market forces have incredible ways to deal with all of that and lower those costs. So, you know, time will definitely take care of a lot of those problems.

MR. PICCONE: Well, just in wrapping up, I mean, I would just thank you all for coming. I just -- on this last comment, I'm particularly intrigued by your statement about, you know, is the U.S. model the right one given the way Cuban reality exists today? And I would -- I just think of other parts of the world where, you know, cell phone use is exploding. You know, you think about Africa, in particular, and in some of the poorest communities this has become a lifeline and a great contribution to economic development and even quality of life and health and there are just many ways that new technologies can be used.

And so I don't think it's particular to the U.S. as to how -- I mean, we may have a particular model as to how it gets applied in our private marketplace, but I think

that there is such a demand for information in any society that if we want a policy that supports the Cuban people in the very difficult circumstances they live in every day, then we've got to get out of the way and do what we can to support them.

On that note, thank you all very much for coming and we look forward to future engagements. (Applause)

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I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

/s/Carleton J. Anderson, III

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