



ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF THE CUBAN ECONOMY (ASCE)

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NEWSLETTER, NOVEMBER 3, 2009

Message from the ASCE president:

This Fall 2009 ASCE Newsletter provides important information for ASCE members and friends, including on our 19th Annual Meeting, on ASCE participation at the forthcoming American Economic Association meetings; the 2010 ASCE elections; the 20th Annual ASCE meeting scheduled for next July in Miami; and other news.

Regarding the elections, I would like to bring to your attention the significant turnover of the Board next year. About half of the members of the Board are not eligible to serve for a consecutive third term unless they are elected president. For this reason, we welcome other ASCE members who are interested to volunteer to serve on the Board. I would also encourage ASCE members, who have served on previous Boards but not recently to consider serving again. Monthly Board meetings can be attended easily via teleconferences and they are normally held to about one hour.

Jorge Sanguinetty

Report on ASCE 19th Annual Meetings in Miami, Florida on July 30-31-August 1, 2009.

The theme of the 19th Annual Conference of ASCE was "Cuba in a World of Uncertainty". As it has become the practice, this year's conference began with a discussion of the current economic and political situation in Cuba. There were four presentations in this plenary session including one sent from Cuba by Oscar Espinosa Chepe with up to date information on the economic conditions in Cuba. Another very timely plenary session was one devoted to Cuba-US relations where the state of the relations was reviewed and some panelists offered proposals for enhancing the relations. Complementing this session was one on the Island-Diaspora interactions (e.g., remittances) and another on narcotics and migration.

In line with the theme of uncertainty, the impact of the global financial and economic crisis on Cuba was discussed in detailed, analyzing balance of payments developments, external finance, and tourism. The current and future economic reforms were assessed looking at other historical experiences of liberalizations in centrally planned economies, the initiatives taken by Raul Castro, and financial and agricultural reforms (or their lack). Another session discussed investment in the past by the USA in Cuba and on the oil sector, as well as entrepreneurship experience.

There were a number of sessions dedicated to methodological and sectoral issues. The measurement of the Cuban GDP and consumption was a topic of one session and other papers discussed the economic and social balance after 50 years of revolution and the challenges for economic measurement and policies in a bi-monetary economy. Sectoral sessions covered agriculture, legal issues (including one that analyzed what would be involved in ending the US embargo), trade in Cuban artwork, the health sector, and politics and civil society. The 19th Meeting benefitted from the participation of members of the Association of Cuban Engineers and of the Cuban American Association of Civil Engineers which organized two very interesting panels devoted to infrastructure (water, wastewater, transportation and electricity). The student papers session covered a variety of topics including historical, legal, monetary and engineering topics.

At lunch time during the first two days of the conference there were two excellent presentations. Under the sponsorship of the Cuba Study Group, there was a lunch where the premiere screening of the 2009 documentary "Under Cuban Skies: Workers and Their Rights" took place. This documentary shows how unfavorably are labor rights in Cuba compared to those of the Dominican Republic and Mexico. The keynote speaker at the official ASCE luncheon during the second day of the conference was Mr. Tom Gjelten, a senior correspondent from National Public Radio and author of "Bacardi and the Long Fight for Cuba: the Biography of a Cause". Mr. Gjelten gave an outstanding presentation discussing the importance of the Bacardi company in Cuban history as well as drawing broader conclusions about the Cuban experience from that.

ASCE participation at the American Economic Association meetings in January 3-5, 2010 in Atlanta

There will be an ASCE panel at the meetings of the American Economic Association (AEA). The panel will be chaired by Arthur M. Diamond, Jr. from the University of Nebraska-Omaha and the following papers will be presented:

Carmelo Mesa-Lago, University of Pittsburgh - Economic and Social Balance of 50 Years of Cuban Revolution;

Mario Gonzalez-Corzo, Lehman College, City University of New York - A Comparative Analysis of Purchasing Power in Cuba;

Bryan Roberts, Department of Homeland Security, John Devereux, Queens College and Graduate Center, City University of New York, Luis Locay, University of Miami - An Alternative Consumption Estimate for Cuba in the Communist Period
 Andrew Wolfe and Gabriel Di Bella, IMF, - Challenges for Economic Measurement and Policies in a Bimonetary Economy

The discussants will be: Arthur M. Diamond, Jr., University of Nebraska-Omaha, Luis Locay, University of Miami, Gabriel Di Bella, IMF

This panel is very important because the American Economic Association is reviewing the status of affiliated associations and one of the criteria for maintaining the affiliation to the AEA is attendance to the panels of the association during the AEA meetings.

ASCE 2010 Elections

2010 is an election year for ASCE. Members will be asked to elect a new President and a new Board of Directors to carry out the Association's work from August 2010-July 2012. The Board of Directors consists of the President, the immediate past President, who remains in the Board as Vice-president, and ten other members.

To facilitate the process and ensure transparency and fairness, information on election procedures is provided below. Members also are encouraged to become familiar with the rules governing the electoral process. These rules can be found under Governance-Bylaws in our website www.ascecuba.org.

Members can present themselves as candidates to the Nominating Committee, or can be proposed as candidates by any member(s) of ASCE in good standing. These nominations, which must be supported by five members of ASCE, should be addressed to the Chairman of the Committee prior to **March 15, 2010** at the address below:

ASCE Nominating Committee
 c/o Roger Betancourt, Chair
 3506 Saul Road
 Kensington, MD 20895
 or by email to:
Betancou@econ.umd.edu

By **April 15, 2010** the Secretary of ASCE will provide members with official ballots, instructions, and information about the candidates. Completed ballots must be returned in the self-addressed envelopes provided no later than **June 15, 2010**. Votes will be counted and certified by the **Tellers Committee** that will render an official report to the membership during ASCE's annual meeting on August 6-8, 2010. The Tellers Committee will be chaired again by Carlos Montoulieu. Election winners will be announced by email after the Tellers Committee completes its task and informs the Board of Directors. The new Board will assume their elected positions at the conclusion of the business meeting at ASCE's 20th meeting.

A formal ASCE letter asking for nominations for the president and for Board members will be sent early next year to remind ASCE members.

ASCE 20th Annual Meeting

It is not too early to start planning for next year's Annual Meeting. It will be our 20th Meeting in Miami and will be held on July 29-31 at the downtown Hilton Hotel on Biscayne Boulevard where the last few meetings have been held. The Board has chosen the theme of "Cuba at the Crossroads in the 21st Century".

More information will be provided in early 2010 on the 20th Annual Meeting but ASCE will be looking for panel chairmen/women, and presentations on subjects related to the Cuban economy and society, including macroeconomics; banking and finance; agriculture and the sugar industry; tourism; social and political aspects of economic development; education; health; environmental policy; law and legal institutions; civil society; gender issues; governance; infrastructure; and civil-military relations. Preference will be given to proposals for papers and panels related to the main theme, but all proposals will be given consideration.

Cuba Technology/Social Networking Conference

Juan Luis Betancourt and the Cuban Study Group are planning to hold a conference on Cuba Technology and Social Networking to promote the use of IT technology in Cuba and with the outside world. Cuban Americans who are working on these areas are invited in particular to participate. For more details contact JLBetancourt@heidrick.com